

Death toll in Algeria on the rise ahead of polls

ALGIERS (AFP) — As many as 21 people have been killed in Algeria over the past few days in new attacks by suspected militants while the death toll rose in three recent car bombings, press reports said Saturday.

In one of the attacks, which came less than two weeks before legislative elections, in Algeria, four peasants were found with their throats slit Friday near Boufarik, south of Algiers, the daily *Liberte* newspaper reported.

Thursday the bodies of a man and two youths were found lying in a pool of blood in a nearby village, another daily, *Al Watan* reported. The same day a shepherd and his 12-year-old niece had their throats slit in the Chenoua mountains, 80 kilometres west of Algiers, the paper said.

According to several press reports, a further 12 people were murdered at two separate false checkpoints set up by suspected militants. The Algerian press, meanwhile, reported that the death toll from three car bomb attacks over

Algerian prisoner in Italy on hunger strike

MILAN (R) — An Algerian held in jail on arms trafficking charges in Italy has been on hunger strike for three weeks, his lawyer said Friday.

Francesco Piscopo said Djamel Lounici, who was arrested in 1995 on suspicion of links with the armed wing of the Algerian Salvation Front (FIS), had not eaten solid food for 20 days.

He began drinking liquids recently after earlier refusing all nourishment, the lawyer said.

The trial of Lounici and 10 other Algerians in the southern city of Naples was postponed last week for procedural reasons. It was scheduled to begin on Nov. 6.

Italy dropped earlier terrorism charges against Lounici and has agreed to extradite him to France once he has faced arms trafficking charges in Naples.

Lounici was charged in absentia by a French court earlier this year and given a five-year jail term for involvement in guerrilla attacks in Morocco, including one in which two Spaniards died in 1994.

Lounici, who is being held in a northern jail, was arrested in Italy after a wave of bomb attacks in France in 1995 in which eight people were killed and 160 injured.

the past two days in Algeria had gone up. The death toll from a car bomb attack Thursday in Boufarik rose Saturday to 20, with hundreds of people injured, the daily *Le Matin* said, citing

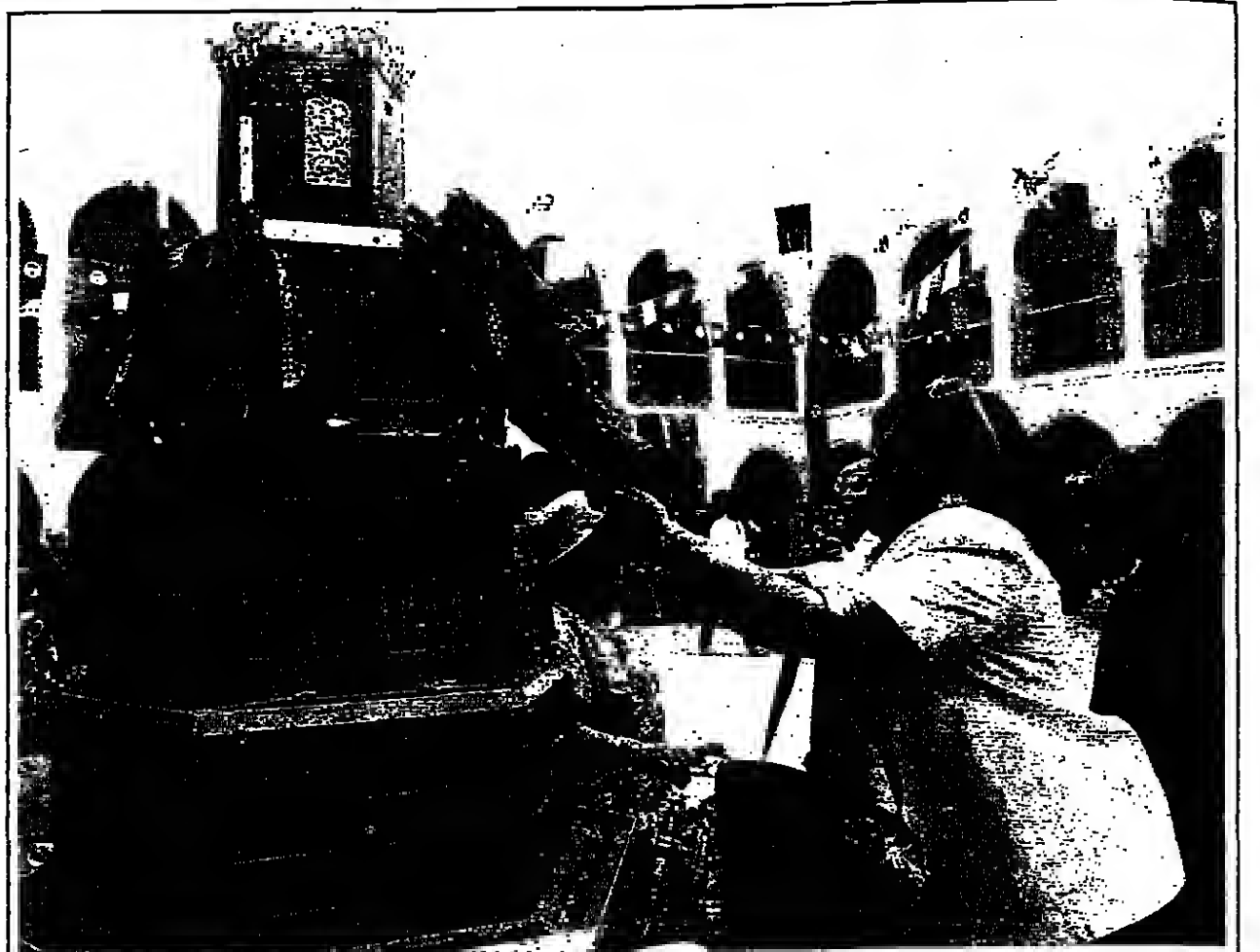
security sources. An official toll earlier said 12 people were killed and 31 injured. One of those killed in the Boufarik car bombing was Mohamed Chenouf, 33, a leader of the Movement of

Society for Peace, formerly Hamas, the biggest legal Islamist party in Algeria, the party said Saturday.

The press also reported that two car bomb attacks in Tlemcen, 400 kilometres from the capital Algiers, claimed between nine and 18 lives, while the official toll said seven people were killed. In a separate development, security forces killed nine suspected fundamentalists in Kabylie, east of Algiers, the daily *La Tribune* reported.

Friday Algerian authorities said they had killed 27 other suspected extremists over the past few days during separate operations across the country. President Liamine Zeroual's government declared Friday through the official APS news agency that it will never allow "blood-thirsty criminals" to foil the June 5 polls.

The elections for the National People's Assembly will be the first since a victory at the polls by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in 1992 was blocked by the military and parliament was suspended.



PILGRIMAGE TO TUNISIAN SYNAGOGUE: Tunisian Jewish community pilgrim Yolande Cohen decorates a Menorah before it is taken by procession to the El Ghriba Synagogue located on the Tunisian island of Jarbah 500 kilometres south of mainland Tunisia on Saturday. Some three to four thousand Jewish pilgrims took part in the procession accompanying the menorah (Reuters photo)

Journalist detained by PNA starts hunger strike over visitation rights

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian American journalist detained after broadcasting live from the Palestinian legislature has begun a hunger strike because he was denied family visits, a relative said Saturday.

The journalist, Daoud Kuttub, was arrested last Tuesday on orders from Palestinian President Yasser Arafat who is often severely criticised in the legislature.

"No charges have been filed against Mr. Kuttub," Arafat spokesman Marwan Kanafani said Saturday that Mr. Kuttub's detention was linked to a contractual dispute, and should not be portrayed as a freedom-of-speech issue.

"I think he was not arrested because he wrote something or sounded an opinion," Mr. Kanafani told APTV.

Mr. Kuttub's family said a contract signed by the parliament speaker, Ahmed Qureia, permitted Mr. Kuttub to broadcast from the legislature. The relatives said Mr. Kuttub was arrested because Mr. Arafat wanted to stop live broadcasts of the council sessions. The official Palestinian TV broadcasts taped, edited versions.

"He (Mr. Kuttub) broadcasted the legislative council's criticism on corruption, embezzlement, bribes. The sessions were full of these charges," Mubarak Awad, a cousin of Mr. Kuttub and a human rights activist, told the Associated Press.

U.S. officials and human rights groups have demanded Mr. Kuttub's immediate release. The U.S. consul general in Jerusalem, Edward Abington, has been trying to arrange a meeting with Mr. Arafat to raise the matter.

Mr. Kuttub was detained Tuesday evening, and is being held in a jail in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Palestinian officials said Mr. Kuttub would not be released until Mr. Arafat came to Ramallah. It was not clear when the Palestinian leader would do so.

Friday evening, Mr. Awad and Mr. Kuttub's three children — Tamara, Bishara and Tania — tried to visit him at the Ramallah jail. Police told the visitors they needed Mr. Arafat's personal permission before they would be allowed to see Mr. Kuttub.

"We faxed him a request but he (Mr. Arafat) never answered it. We started yelling at them (police). He heard us and signalled to us that he is now starting a hunger strike," Mr. Awad said.

The New York-based group Human Rights Watch demanded Saturday that Mr. Kuttub be released immediately.

"We are writing to protest the continuing detention without charge of Daoud Kuttub," the group wrote to Mr. Arafat.

Mr. Arafat's government has been widely criticised for repeated human rights violations, such as arbitrary arrests, mistreatment of detainees and restrictions on the freedom of speech.

Meguid ready to visit Iraq to discuss Kuwaiti POWs

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — The head of the Arab League said in an interview published Saturday he is ready to visit Iraq to try to discover the fate of prisoners Kuwait claims have been held since the 1991 Gulf war.

"I am ready to visit Iraq, but on condition that the visit yield positive results," Esmat Abdul Meguid told the Kuwaiti daily *Al Watan* concerning the prisoner issue.

Mr. Meguid said Baghdad is "obliged to outline the fate of these prisoners by providing lists of names and identities of those who have died and those still alive."

Kuwait claims Iraq has not accounted for about 600 prisoners and missing persons since the seven-month Iraqi occupation of Kuwait that ended in February 1991.

Baghdad has admitted that some of those listed by Kuwait were transferred to Iraqi jails in the south of the country, but says it lost track of them when a Shiite rebellion gripped the region after the war over Kuwait.

Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials meet each month on their border for talks on the issue sponsored by the International Committee of the Red Cross and in the presence of representatives from the United States, France, Britain and Saudi Arabia.

Former Hizbollah chief denies existence of Kuwaiti branch

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — A former leader of Hizbollah said Saturday there is no group of the same name in Kuwait or elsewhere that has links with Lebanon's pro-Iranian Shiite guerrilla group.

"There is no Hizbollah in Kuwait or any other country," the former secretary-general of Hizbollah in Lebanon, Subhi Al Tufaeli, told the Kuwaiti daily *Al Rai* Al Aam.

Earlier this month, Kuwaiti acting Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah said "elements" of an Islamist group calling itself Hizbollah-

security sources. An official toll earlier said 12 people were killed and 31 injured. One of those killed in the Boufarik car bombing was Mohamed Chenouf, 33, a leader of the Movement of

Kuwait existed in the emirate but were "not powerful."

"Whoever says Hizbollah is in Kuwait as a local party, he knows best," Mr. Tufaeli said, concerning the recent comments by the acting premier. "But we have no relation with anyone who is a member of Hizbollah in Kuwait. We have not founded a party like that and we have no relation with anything called Hizbollah there," he added.

Mr. Tufaeli also denied that Hizbollah had any links with opposition groups in Bahrain, where Shiite seeking the restoration of parlia-

ment are leading a campaign of sporadic protests and arson attacks against the Sunni-led government. "As for the Gulf, and particularly in Bahrain and the issue of the opposition and Hizbollah, this in my assessment is not linked to anything called Hizbollah," he said.

Kuwaiti and other Gulf Press reports have talked of the existence of branches of Hizbollah that have taken a foothold in several Gulf countries. In April, the Secretary General of Hizbollah in Lebanon Hassan Nasrallah, also denied the existence of Hizbollah in Kuwait.

CAIRO (AP) — A top Egyptian theologian said dealing with Israel while it builds settlements in Arab east Jerusalem is banned by Islam and punishable by God.

In comments published Friday, Sheikh Nasr Farid Wasel also urged Muslims to boycott countries dealing with Israel to force it "to adhere to international resolutions."

Mr. Wasel is the second influential cleric in Egypt to take a headline stand against Israel as Egypt tries to mediate between Israel and the Palestinians in an effort to restart

stalled Mideast peace talks. It was not clear if Mr. Wasel was calling for a complete suspension of relations with Israel or only suspended trade links.

His comments come ahead of President Hosni Mubarak's Tuesday meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Egypt.

In his capacity as mufti, Mr. Wasel's decrees are generally binding, but Egypt's secular government sometimes ignores them if they run contrary to its policies.

"Dealing with Israel ... is

forbidden and anyone who does it will face a severe tax with God," Mr. Wasel was quoted as saying by the weekly *Al Ahram* Al Arabi magazine.

Egypt in 1979 became the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel, but relations have hit a low point since Mr. Netanyahu's headline government came to power in 1996.

The Middle East peace process broke down in March after Israel started building homes for Jews in Arab east Jerusalem.

The ancient city is holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

"Jerusalem represents the honour of Muslims and Christians together and they will face God's punishment if they are lax in defending it," Mr. Wasel said. "What is going on now... Judaising the holy Jerusalem and building settlements is illegal."

In March, Mohammad Sayed Tantawi, another leading cleric, called for a holy war to take back Jerusalem. Mr. Tantawi heads the leading Muslim institution of religious scholarship, Al Azhar.

DAMASCUS (AFP) — An Iraqi economic delegation is to visit Syria soon following a groundbreaking trip in the opposite direction by Syrian businessmen, a member of the Syrian delegation said Saturday.

"We invited members of the Iraqi Union of Chambers of Commerce to Syria and they promised to come in the next few weeks," said Saleh Mallah, a member of parliament and President of the Aleppo Chamber of Commerce.

A seven-member trade delegation from Syria visited Iraq last week in the first such mission for almost two decades. The delegation, which travelled to and from Iraq through the border which has otherwise been closed since the early 1980s, met a total of seven ministers during the visit as well as Iraqi trade and industry leaders. Mr. Mallah said its members wanted to "study the question of exporting (to Iraq) food and medicine under the U.N. oil-for-food deal."

The agreement which came into effect in December allows sanctions-hit Iraq to resume limited oil exports to raise money for humanitarian supplies.

"When the goods cross the border it will automatically reopen and Syrian-Iraqi (economic) cooperation will resume," Mr. Mallah said.

Syria and Iraq are ruled by rival branches of the Baath Party. In the early 1980s Syria closed its land border with Iraq which it blamed for a series of explosions in Syria at the time.

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Min./Max. temp. Amman 17/29 Aqaba 23/38 Deserts 15/33 Jordan Valley 21/27

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 30, Aqaba 38 Humidity readings: Amman 27 per cent, Aqaba 23 per cent.

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Iraqi trade team to visit Syria

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Cabinet discusses allowances in weekly session

AMMAN (J.T.) — At its regular weekly session, the Council of Ministers Saturday discussed allowances which the government promised those employees who are members of professional associations. Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi announced.

It will finalise these discussions in the next regular session, he added.

The government has promised to raise the professional allowance for public sector doctors, dentists, pharmacists, veterinarians, nurses and engineers as stipulated by a memorandum which the two sides signed last October.

According to that memorandum, pharmacists' allowances will be raised from 90 to 100 per cent, nurses from 60 to 75 per cent and engineers from 90 to 120 per cent.

Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) President Hosni Abu Ghida announced that the raising of allowances is only one article of the memorandum which the association concluded with the government.

He stated his hope that the other articles be respected as well.

During Saturday's session, the Cabinet formed Jordan's delegation to a regional conference covering health in the Middle East and North Africa, due to be held in Cairo, as well as a second delegation to attend an international conference on statistics and social security in Prague.

Both conferences are slated to be held in early June.

The Cabinet created a third delegation to attend the Global Earth Summit to be held in New York on July 23.

Conference to cover vocational training

AMMAN (Petra) — A general conference on vocational training development will be held in Amman Tuesday to focus on promoting vocational training to cater to local and regional labour markets, according to Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) Director General Ali Nasrallah.

He stated that the conference will outline vocational training in Jordan as well as the role of the private sector and non-governmental organisations in promoting vocational training project investments.

The conference is also designed to orient the general public on the needs and achievements of vocational training as well as summarising experiences of other countries in the field, Mr. Nasrallah explained.

Between 250 and 300 participants from the Arab World, as well as regional and international organisations will participate in the meetings, he added.

Mr. Nasrallah confirmed that the VTC is in the process of setting job descriptions for trades in accordance with a new draft law to be debated and endorsed by Parliament.

He said that the draft law provides for the creation of a special court to handle trade and labour issues.

The VTC is also implementing a number of training projects in cooperation with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at Sahab Industrial Estates and building a vocational centre there directed for the training of women at the estimated cost of JD 3 million.

NFD announces arrest of suspected drug traffickers

AMMAN (Petra) — The Anti-Narcotics and Forgery Department (NFD) Saturday announced the arrest of a number of persons allegedly involved in drug trafficking cases.

The NFD confirmed that its teams seized three kilograms of heroin, 100 kilograms of hashish and a large stash of captagon drug pills smuggled into the country.

NFD Director Colonel Nazih Shreideh confirmed that, upon a tip, members of his department arrested a woman and her son at Wadi Araba in possession of heroin with a street value estimated at JD 500,000.

According to Col. Shreideh, security services in neighbouring Arab countries, which he declined to identify, informed his department that five persons crossed into Jordan with drugs on their person.

The NFD found five persons with 100 kilograms of hashish and detained them for later trial, Col. Shreideh added.

On May 15, a vehicle which entered Jordan from a neighbouring country was searched and found to be in possession of a large amount of captagon pills hidden in a secret compartment, he stated.

The suspects involved have been referred to court for trial, according to Col. Shreideh.

He said that over the last few months his department has handled 29 drug-related cases and that 47 people were therein arrested.

In the same period, the NFD arrested five persons, including two Jordanians, attempting to traffic in \$11,000 of forged currency.

Russian parliamentary official confers with Senate speaker

AMMAN (Petra) — The head of the Russian-Arab Affairs Department of the Duma (Russian Parliament) Ramadan Abdul Latif Saturday expressed his country's desire to strengthen ties with Jordan in parliamentary affairs.

During a meeting with Senate Speaker Ahmad Lawzi, the Russian parliamentarian confirmed that his department was looking to the Jordanian Parliament to act as an intermediary in furthering channels of cooperation with other Arab parliaments.

Mr. Abdul Latif described the Middle East peace process as a major component of Russia's

foreign policy.

Russia is determined to fulfil its role of full partner and co-sponsor to the peace process.

The two sides also reviewed bilateral relations and issues of common concern.

Jordan looks to Russia to play a key role in establishing a just and lasting regional peace as it is co-sponsoring the peace process with the United States, Mr. Lawzi said.

Jordan is pursuing all efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, according to the speaker, and is also anticipating stronger relations with Russia in cultural, scientific, economic and technological fields.

Mr. Abdul Latif, accompanied by an official delegation on his three-day visit to Jordan, later met with Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Srour and the two discussed Jordanian-Russian parliamentary cooperation and called for the further promotion of these relations.

Jordan hopes that Russia will play a stronger role in the peace process at a time when Israel is displaying an obdurate stand in regards to the implementation of the peace requirements and, therefore, obstructing the peace process, Mr. Srour said.

Russia must persuade Israel to abolish its measures and illegal plans for settlements in both Arab

east Jerusalem and other occupied territories, he added.

Mr. Srour also urged Russia to help end the U.N. embargo of Iraq which, he said, has now implemented all U.N. resolutions and complied with the world community's demands.

He voiced Jordan's concern over the Turkish invasion of northern Iraq, stressing that Jordan totally rejects any interference in Iraq's internal affairs.

Moscow is keen on lifting the embargo on Iraq and ending its people's sufferings and has recently made moves to achieve that goal, Mr. Abdul Latif responded.

Jordan to participate in urban seminar

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan is to participate in the eleventh meeting of the Arab Cities Organisation (ACO), due to open in Tunis this week, to discuss urban organisational strategies for the 21st century.

Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan Saturday described the conference as focusing on developments in the social, economic and cultural arenas of Arab cities and their effects on residents therein.

Mr. Kreishan will leave for Tunis Sunday at the head of a Jordanian delegation to the meeting.

He will deliver Jordan's address, outlining development in the Kingdom's cities as well as progress realised under His Majesty King Hussein.

Head of the Local Councils Department at the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Basem Khatib stated that the conference would also review a report, organised by the department's secretary general and another by the ACO Fund which provides loans to Arab cities.

New progressive alliance...

(Continued from page 1)

alliance.

However, "we expect to obtain a considerable number of seats," he said, without elaborating.

In the 1993 general elections, Mr. Masri alone won nearly 9,000 votes in Amman's third district, while the Progressive Democratic Alliance he was heading in the 12th Parliament counted 22 deputies.

Five men stronger than the IAF, which had 17 representatives in the same legislature.

In an interview with the Jordan Times earlier this month, Mr. Masri said he was working to establish a permanent front, with objectives reaching beyond mere electoral purposes.

"Our target is not the elections, but a permanent alliance, and our objectives are too important for us to rush into anything," he told the Jordan Times. At the time, it seemed some obstacles were laying in the way of the establishment of the projected progressive coalition: "There is no harmony among the parties discussing such a unified bloc."

Mr. Masri conceded, pointing to a "problem of individuals, political lines and behaviours."

He was most likely referring to some statements issued to the Arabic press at the very

beginning of May by leftist Zaqza Deputy Bassam Haddadin, who reportedly announced the progressive coalition as a "fait accompli."

"Nobody should claim that a coalition has already materialised," Mr. Masri commented, declining to elaborate any further.

However, "there are no obstacles any more," Dr. Abu Hassan said yesterday, "and we have already reached the point where we all share the same political positions and ideas."

At the fourth annual conference of Al Mustaqbal, held also yesterday and entitled "One Front To Protect Democracy," Messrs. Masri, Obeidat and Madanat were sitting next to Mr. Arar at the conference table. More than 500 people attended the event, which focused on ways to react to the hard-line policies of the current Likud government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, with calls for the complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Holy City of Jerusalem, as well as, on the internal front, on recent governmental measures affecting democracy and freedom.

"One could say we have already reached the pre-union stage," Dr. Abu Hassan concluded.

The minister also announced that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat called the two leaders by telephone during their meeting and discussed issues facing the peace process and the latest developments on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

According to Dr. Mutawi, King Hussein and president Mubarak also discussed the latest developments in northern Iraq and they expressed their full support for Iraq's unity voicing hope that the current military operations there would not harm Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He said that the two leaders explored ideas to end the U.N. embargo on Iraq and facilitating the flow of goods to the Iraqi people. They both called for strenuous efforts to end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The King and the president first had a closed-door meeting and then they were joined by officials at both sides.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi said after the meeting that the King and the Egyptian president underlined the need to activate the Jordanian-Egyptian

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Resource centre aims to organise women's socio-economic, political and electoral needs

Zelma Durra
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Movements to help educate women and improve their socio-economic positions are on the increase in Jordan. The majority of these are member organisations, or charities which also offer support to outsiders seeking help.

The Princess Basmia Women's Resource Centre (PBWRC), established in 1996, aims to be "a support mechanism for these organisations, complementing the overall machinery for the advancement of women," according to PBWRC Director Farah Daghistani.

PBWRC acts as an intermediary between Jordanian women and those who propose changes at the policy level. Thus, it coordinates women's views across the country to ensure the materialisation of laws which cater to them.

According to Ms. Daghistani, this is done through cooperation between PBWRC and the Jordan National Committee for Women (JNCW), which lobbies for policy-related issues concerning women.

It affords the JNCW "feedback from the grass roots," through its link with existing women's organisations, such as the Jordanian National Forum for Women (JNFOW).

In addition to its aforementioned intermediary role, the PBWRC runs various programmes, "it's a complex [organisation] as everything is linked," she said.

The Women in Decision-Making Programme is designed to educate working women on the municipal level. "This programme [familiarises women with modifications to the law]. It consists of lectures on subjects such as how to achieve a higher [socio-economic] position, rights to maternity leave and petitioning for a raise," Ms. Daghistani said.

"[These are] issues about which many women are unsure."

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"It also educates women as to how to run a pressure group and, in light of the upcoming elections, how to run a campaign or choose the candidate who best represents their interests," she added.

There will be 126 national sessions raising awareness for the upcoming elections, Project Coordinator of the Women in Decision-Making Programme Ashtar Lutfi said.

Through the assistance of women's organisations, they hope to reach women at the grassroots level, as campaign and media advisors, who will teach them how to canvass. They will also conduct polls to monitor women's progress across the country, thereby consolidating the national effort.

It appears that enthusiasm among women concerning involvement in the elections is more focused outside of Amman.

"Grassroots work is important as people [in the rural areas] are more enthusiastic, their communities are more closely knit and so women are more aware of their community's needs," Ms. Lutfi said. "They are also subjected to much of the worst and are keen to change for the better."

Yet despite the enthusiasm, PBWRC does not base their success upon seeing a great improvement in the number of women MPs as, "this is the first time such an operation has been attempted, therefore even if we are not successful, we will know that we have made women more politically aware," Ms. Lutfi explained. "At least now many more will be aware of why they voted [as they did], thus forcing male candidates to the realisation that women's issues should be taken into consideration."

The Women in Development Programme has another agenda which currently gives women a basic guide to income generation although, "[the title

implies the programme could deal with a wide range of topics] and we do hope to eventually cover a broader spectrum," Ms. Daghistani stated.

"It isn't enough to make women politically and legally aware without teaching them [ways of attaining] economic independence," she maintained.

The programme provides training courses which aim to prepare women for jobs which would be more effective in their area. "We are trying to tie it to local realities," Ms. Daghistani said.

In order to better ascertain the needs of Jordanian women, the PBWRC sent out 15,000 questionnaires.

"So far, we have had replies requesting sewing machines and goats," she said.

"We want to satisfy some of the more simple, immediate demands but at the same time are looking towards the long term; improving skills, moving towards more business-oriented jobs which [correspond to geographic location]," Ms. Daghistani said. "For example, what works in Ma'an may be different to Tafleeh. As the country moves towards privatisation [this is the most progressive thing to do]."

The centre also boasts a Media and Public Awareness Department which aims to increase public awareness concerning women-related issues.

There is a Research Studies Unit which maintains and updates the constant stream of information from the grassroots level to the policy-making level. This information is available to all who wish to use it, Ms. Daghistani explained.

Currently the unit is working on a "modern concept" which would link all governorates, via computer to one main site, further bonding the grassroots with the policy-makers, she concluded.

result through the media or through a question and answer session. We know what we want and we know what is right. We will defend our rights with all our might and capabilities in order to arrive at our aspired goal."

In reply to a question on whether Egypt is making new moves towards the peace process, King Hussein said: "I believe that when Egypt makes moves in connection with the Palestine problem it is acting from a position of responsibility and we support and bless Egypt's efforts because we consider ourselves working as a team."

Replying to a question about the U.S. and the European role in the peace process, the King said: "The U.S. has a basic role and no other party can play that role. I believe the United States might reconsider its position when faced with dangers threatening the peace process and we hope that it will have a more positive role in the peace process and will play the part

of a partner in building just and durable peace."

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Editor of political party newspaper denied bail

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The editor-in-chief of a political party newspaper, detained on libel charges Thursday, was Saturday denied bail, according to the Amman prosecutor.

Osama Rantisi, editor-in-chief of The Jordan People's Democratic Party, (Hashd) was arrested at noon Thursday and ordered detained for two weeks by Amman Prosecutor Fuad Daradkeh. Mr. Rantisi's defence attorney told the Jordan Times.

"The prosecutor rejected our request to free Mr. Rantisi on bail, and I am planning to appeal to the president of the Court of First Instance," Defence Attorney Mahmoud Kayed affirmed.

Mr. Rantisi, 30, was arrested in his office and formally charged with lack of accuracy and objectivity in reporting as well as slandering and tarnishing the image and dignity of individuals.

The lawsuit was filed by Jordan Hospital, after an

article appeared in the May 12 issue, alleging that the hospital had lost JD 8 million since its establishment three years ago.

The article further alleged that Israeli investors visited the hospital and offered to cover hospital debts if they might become shareholders therein.

A temporary Press and Publications Law, ratified by the government last week, introduced stringent new regulations in regards to news coverage as well as hefty fines and capital requirements, particularly for weekly newspapers.

However, Prosecutor Daradkeh confirmed that Mr. Rantisi will be tried in strict accordance with the old Press and Publications Law, "as the article was published before the new temporary law was ratified."

According to Mr. Daradkeh, the case was transferred to the Court of First Instance, which will set a date to begin hearing the case.

WHAT'S GOING ON

PLAY

*French play: "Mime et Thysme" at the King Abdullah Gardens amphitheatre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

*Spring Exhibition of Plastic Art 97 at Greater Amman Municipality, Ras Al 'Ain, until June 30.

* "One-of-a-Kind" artists' book exhibit, at the American Centre, Abdoun, until June 25.

* Fifth exhibition of electric, electronic, and engineering industries at the Global Exhibit Centre, University Road, until May 26.

* Works by Australian artists at the Royal Cultural Centre, until May 30.

* Works by Munir Al-Ubaidi at Hamourah Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until May 29.

* Spring exhibition '97 entitled "Spring is Blooming" at the Jordan River Designs (Tel. 6130612), until May 31.

* Works by Issam Tantawi at Alia Art Gallery, Jahal Amman, until May 29.

* Display of caricature drawings by Imad Hnjaj at Balqa Art Gallery, Fuhels, until May 25.

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Russia warns NATO over ex-Soviet states

MOSCOW (R) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov warned NATO Saturday not to offer membership to former Soviet republics but ruled out the use of force to prevent such a move.

"We will not react now like we did in relations with Czechoslovakia in 1968. It is completely clear there will be no repetition of that," Mr. Primakov told a news conference, referring to the Soviet-led invasion which halted moves towards democracy.

Mr. Primakov hailed the agreement which President Boris Yeltsin is due to sign with the leaders of the 16 NATO countries in Paris Tuesday putting relations on a new footing after the end of the cold war.

But he said the accord did not mean Russia approved of NATO's plans to expand eastwards and reiterated that Moscow would resist any attempts by NATO to lure in the countries which won independence when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

"We are categorically against NATO taking in the republics of the former Soviet Union," said Mr. Primakov, who negotiated the agreement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

"We have the right to defend our interests, including developing our relations with the military alliance

according to how it conducts its policy," he said, giving no details of how Russia might respond.

Russia is anxious not to have NATO right on its doorstep and is particularly sensitive to any Western approaches to fellow Slav neighbour Ukraine and the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Lithuanian membership of the Western alliance could also mean Russia was completely cut off by NATO members from its small enclave of Kaliningrad, bordering Lithuania and Poland.

Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, which used to belong to the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact, are expected to be offered NATO membership at an alliance summit in Madrid in July.

Romania and Slovenia also hope to be in the first wave of new entrants.

The West has not ruled out that former Soviet republics could eventually join NATO.

Despite his warnings over the former Soviet republics, Mr. Primakov said he did not want to cast doubts over the Russia-NATO accord before it was even signed.

The agreement creates a joint council between the two sides to give Moscow a say in matters directly affecting its security.

Moscow says it also offers binding guarantees that NATO will not build up its forces on the territory of new members and that the

alliance will not base nuclear weapons there.

"The document is a unique breakthrough in relations between Russia and NATO," Mr. Primakov said.

He dismissed criticism by Communists and nationalists that he sold out Russian national interests in the negotiations, saying it was foolish to debate who had won or lost.

"This is not a football match. Reason won, everybody won," he said.

Meanwhile, the European Commission's top envoy to Seoul said Saturday, a day after the commission announced a huge food aid package, that the situation in North Korea is "very explosive."

"The situation is very explosive," Tue Rohrsted told a news conference. "Nobody knows whether it will explode or implode."

"There are clear signs of malnutrition, particularly among children," he said. There was a "crying need" for help for the elderly, and many hospitals had been forced to close as health care workers focused on their own survival.

"There's no medicine, no drugs, no food," said Mr. Rohrsted, who heads the delegation of the European Commission in Seoul.

On Friday, the European Commission said it was sending 155,000 tonnes of food worth 46.3 million ECUs (\$53.2 million) to

North Korea, including rice, maize and vegetable oils.

This followed an agreement by the European Union Thursday to join an international consortium working to dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons programme by supplying the country with relatively safe nuclear reactors and interim fuel supplies.

By throwing its weight behind international food appeals and the nuclear initiative, the EU was signalling a new engagement with Asia, Mr. Rohrsted said.

"The European Union has clearly signified that our relations with Asia are not only commercial and economic, they are also of a political nature," he said.

"We want to make our contribution to stability and peace on the Korean peninsula and North East Asia and other trouble spots in Asia."

An EU investigation team in March visited three kindergartens in North Korean cities unaffected by floods in 1995 and 1996. It found 20 per cent of children under five were malnourished, and three toddlers were "in an advanced state of malnourishment," Mr. Rohrsted said.

"The Stalinist system cannot feed its people," he said, stressing that floods had simply exacerbated a problem caused by disastrous agricultural policies. "It will be necessary to implement drastic reforms," he said.



Peru's President Alberto Fujimori (left) waves as he walks beside Bangladesh President Shahabuddin Ahmed (centre) and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after his arrival in Dhaka, Saturday, for a two-day visit. (Reuters photo)

Peruvian president begins Bangladesh visit amid protests

DHAKA (AFP) — Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori arrived here Saturday, 20 minutes later than scheduled, as several groups staged demonstrations against his two-day visit, the first by a South American leader.

A large police contingent armed with guns and tear gas blocked more than 200 activists of the leftwing Ganatantrik Chatra Union near the Shahabagh area, close to the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel where Mr. Fujimori was staying.

A second protest by a student group called the "Jatiya Chatra Dal," another leftwing group, were also blocked short of the hotel by police, who have been put on alert, officials said.

The protesters carried placards and shouted slogans: "Imperialist Fujimori go back" and "Down with U.S. imperialism and his puppet — go back fascist killer Fujimori."

The groups were protesting Fujimori's decision to use troops to storm the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima on April 22 and free 72 hostages held by

rebels. All the 14 rebels from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), two troops and one hostage died in the lightning raid.

Hours before his arrival, Rashed Khan Menon of the leftwing Workers' Party criticised plans to extend a "grand welcome" to Mr. Fujimori, saying no democratic country could support the "murder" carried out in the name of releasing hostages at the Japanese ambassador's residence.

"Fujimori is a dictator," he said in a statement published here Saturday. In a statement faxed to AFP, the hitherto unknown "Liaison Committee of Revolutionaries, Bangladesh," described Mr. Fujimori as a "killer, a fascist, an autocrat and an imperialist agent."

"A protest and procession will be held ... against the visit," the statement signed by its coordinator Faizul Hakim said.

Bangladesh President Shahabuddin Ahmed was the first to greet Mr. Fujimori at the airport, followed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed and

several senior members of her cabinet.

The Peruvian leader, who was forced to delay his departure from Lima because of a bomb threat, was scheduled to arrive in Dhaka at 1230 p.m. (0630 GMT) but the aircraft carrying him landed at 1250 p.m., airport officials said.

Mr. Fujimori, accompanied by 39 business leaders, government officials, reporters and his security detail, is due to hold talks with Bangladeshi leaders to expand bilateral trade and cooperation before travelling onto India Sunday.

Dhaka streets have been decorated with the national flags of the two countries and police have been posted across this overcrowded capital of eight million people.

Bangladesh was among the first countries to approve Mr. Fujimori's action to free the hostages, saying the government "abhors any kind of violence or intimidation to register a viewpoint and therefore, it is natural we received the news of the end of the crisis with a great sense of relief."

Dhaka boosts cyclone relief efforts

DHAKA (R) — Bangladesh stepped up relief work on islands and coastal districts where a cyclone and subsequent disease have killed at least 111 people, officials said Saturday.

They said the death toll from Monday's cyclone remained at 105 but six deaths had been caused by a spreading diarrhoea epidemic that had already affected 5,000 people.

Newspaper reporters said after visiting affected areas that at least 20 people had died of diarrhoeal diseases and more than 20,000 people were suffering.

"At least 2,000 patients have been admitted in hospitals in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts alone," said Nizamuddin Ahmad, editor of the Chittagong-based private BNA

news agency.

"The government is trying very hard to prevent the disease but doctors say the loss of lives will rise," he said.

Kaji Padi, health officer on Kutubdia Island, told reporters Saturday that at least 90 diarrhoea patients were admitted to local clinics Friday alone.

The cyclone blowing in from the Bay of Bengal at 200 kph (125 mph) ravaged much of the country's flat coastline Monday, but Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the loss of lives and property was much less than feared.

Fishing community sources said Saturday some 600 fishermen missing at sea for five days had yet to return. "Many of them may have drowned although we still hope they will come back

alive," one community leader said.

The prime minister has asked officials and leaders of her Awami League party to ensure that relief supplies reach the afflicted millions faster, officials said Saturday.

The government said it would not seek international aid for the cyclone survivors but would accept any voluntary offers.

The U.S. government has offered \$25,000 in immediate assistance, said an American embassy statement published in newspapers Saturday.

Low-lying Bangladesh is vulnerable to cyclones. The country's worst storm in 1991 killed at least 138,000 people and left millions homeless.

Chirac set to win French vote but polls show lead narrowing

PARIS (AFP) — Some 39 million French voters go to the polls Sunday in the first round of general elections with surveys showing a narrowing lead for President Jacques Chirac's risky gamble to clinch a conservative majority in parliament until the year 2002.

While the Paris Bourse has already given a resounding vote for the president, the franc hiccupped late Friday as dealers awaited the ballot, and a poll released Saturday just 24 hours before the vote tipped victory for the ruling centre-right, but with a decreasing lead over the opposition left.

The Ipsos polling institute Saturday gave the Conservatives a 43-seat majority in the 577-seat National Assembly, or Lower House of Parliament, up for election in the two-stage vote May 25 and June 1.

That figure was slightly down on a poll the previous day by the same institute for the Daily Telegraph, which saw a 51-seat majority for the right over the opposition coalition.

Mr. Chirac called the election 10 months ahead of schedule saying he needed a fresh mandate to push through austerity measures allowing France to meet the criteria for European Monetary Union.

A left-wing victory over the next two weekends would mean "cohabitation," with the conservative Gaullist president having to share power with Socialist leader Lionel Jospin as prime minister of a government in which his Communist allies would have portfolios.

"Anything is possible," headlined the Saturday edition of the popular Le

Parisien daily, while the conservative Le Figaro predicted "a tough battle" and the centrist Liberation wondered whether it would be a "surprise vote."

In late end-week trading, the franc slipped to 3.37 mark before recovering over worries "that narrow results between the right and the left could cause a volatile, nervous market Monday," trader Karine Lenoir said.

The house meanwhile has put on an optimistic 9.05 per cent gain over the past four weeks in spite of the uncertainties of the election campaign.

The latest Ipsos poll credited the ruling Conservatives with 38 per cent in the first round of the two-stage vote and 37.5 per cent to the left.

Forecasting seats after the final run-off June 1, Ipsos said the Rally For the Republic (RPR) and Union for French Democracy (UDF) would win 309 seats while the Socialist Party would win 240 and the Communists 26.

It also forecast 14.5 per cent for the ultra right National Front, giving it two seats in the lower house of the parliament.

Abstention was down to 32 per cent from 35 in what has been a lacklustre campaign.

Under French law, opinion polls cannot be published in France a week before the first round of the election Sunday. Round two is on June 1.

But pollsters and news media have used the Internet to duck around the rules.

Prime Minister Alain Juppe took a cautious line ahead of the vote, saying the first round of voting would be hard to interpret

because of the number of candidates and it was necessary to "mobilise now" for the second round.

He predicted a wide "dispersal of votes" in Sunday's first round that would leave no clear indication of the election's ultimate direction.

Asked by a listener to commit himself not to be the next prime minister in case of a conservative victory, Mr. Juppe, who is deeply unpopular, said the choice of prime minister was entirely up to Mr. Chirac.

Meanwhile, members of the far-right National Front clashed with anti-racist protesters in the town of Vitrolles, two days before the French vote in parliamentary elections.

The National Front and the protesters blamed each other for the brawl in which the front said Claude Bourges, an aide to the southern town's front mayor, was injured in the jaw and taken to hospital.

Police intervened when fighting broke out in Vitrolles' open-air market between members of the front and militants of the group "Ras Le Front" (Enough of the Front). Both sides had been distributing leaflets ahead of Sunday's first round of France's parliamentary election.

The rightists included deputy party leader Bruno Megret, whose wife Catherine was elected mayor this year to make Vitrolles the fourth town in France in the hands of Jean-Marie Le Pen's anti-immigrant party.

Mr. Megret said his wife had filed lawsuits against the head of the SOS Racism group, Fode Sylia, and others for inciting the violence in the town of 40,000.

Colombia's Samper snubs U.S. at ceremony

MARIQUITA, Colombia (R) — President Ernesto Samper Friday snubbed Washington at a ceremony supposedly highlighting close U.S.-Colombian cooperation in the war against drugs.

The ceremony, at an air force base on the outskirts of this town in an Andean Mountain valley northwest of Bogota, marked the formal bandover of 12 UH-1H "Huey" helicopters donated by United States to support anti-narcotics operations by Colombia's National Police.

It also marked the formal opening here of a U.S.-backed police aviation school and training base, which will specialise in instructing police and air force pilots across Latin America in counter-narcotics operations, including the aerial spraying of illicit drug crops.

The inauguration of this base is a symbol of the continuing cooperation in the fight against drugs between the United States and Colombia, an upbeat U.S. Ambassador Myles Frechette, who was at the ceremony, told reporters.

"We contributed a lot to the construction of this base," he said, noting that Washington provided \$5 million of the estimated \$7 million needed to build the sprawling 47-acre (19-hectare) facility.

But Mr. Samper, making one of his first public appearances with Mr. Frechette since Washington "decertified" Colombia's anti-drug efforts for a second consecutive year in February, avoided thanking Mr. Frechette or the United States in general in a speech inaugurating the training base.

He also avoided shaking the U.S. envoy's hand or sitting within more than six chairs of him on the podium set up for the ceremony.

However, Mr. Samper did take a thinly veiled swipe at the United States, which is the world's biggest consumer of illegal drugs.

"We have the moral right to ask other countries to do their part (in the drug war) by stopping the level of drug consumption," Mr. Samper said.

Burmese opposition says junta holds 192 members

BANGKOK (R) — The number of Burmese opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) members detained by the military government ahead of a planned party meeting has risen to 192, a senior NLD official said Saturday.

But a government spokesman contacted by Reuters again denied there had been any detentions and asked the NLD, headed by opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, to prove its charges.

The NLD official said by telephone from Rangoon that of the total held about 60 were NLD members of parliament elected in the 1990 general election while the rest were party leaders at township and other levels.

"Today we received messages that a total of 192 members have been detained at home or confined at specific places all over the country," said the official by telephone from Rangoon.

Despite the detentions, other senior NLD members who managed to reach the party headquarters in Rangoon had discussed its political, economic, legal and justice reports as planned ahead of a general meeting set for May 27-28.

The party gathering is planned to coincide with the seventh anniversary of the NLD's landslide 1990 election victory which the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) never recognised.

The NLD has had few opportunities to gather in a large group since it won the 1990 election, as the military has thwarted previous attempts.

Ms. Suu Kyi was not available for comment.

"Even if the planned meeting is stopped by the authorities on that day, we have agreement among senior party members on the issues we planned to discuss, and that will do," the NLD official said.

He expected a quiet weekend for the NLD as most members had completed their party business over the past few days in Rangoon and were waiting to see if they could hold their party gathering at Ms. Suu Kyi's house.

But the government spokesman said the opposition was fabricating the detentions.

"This is not true. No one has been detained. If they can tell us exactly who is detained and where, then the real story can unravel. Tomorrow they will say 300 detained," he added.

Earlier this week, the government said some NLD members had been requested by local authorities to refrain from acting in a way as to create chaos in the country.

The spokesman said so far the NLD had not sought permission to hold its planned May 27-28 gathering.

Albanian government urges lifting of emergency

TIRANA (AFP) — The Albanian government has called on President Sali Berisha to lift a state of emergency imposed more than two months ago to put down rioting over failed investment schemes.

"The lifting of the state of emergency is necessary to restore an atmosphere compatible with holding elections on June 29," said Prime Minister Bashkim Fino.

Mr. Berisha, who is held responsible for the financial collapse by those who lost their savings in the bogus schemes, imposed the state of emergency on March 2 after ordering civilians to surrender weapons looted from army barracks. Mr. Fino gave the president the draft of a decree lifting the emergency. The government of national reconciliation had earlier approved the draft at the instigation of opposition political parties.

The emergency was imposed after six weeks of anti-government demonstrations which boiled over into open rebellion. Public buildings were looted and set on fire, arms depots and barracks were ransacked in an orgy of violence which devastated infrastructure and left the country in chaos.

More than 1,200 people have been shot dead since the violence erupted.

On Friday, six policemen were killed and eight others were wounded when they were ambushed by a group of gunmen at Cerrik 50 kilometres south of Tirana.

Special forces had been sent to Cerrik to try to wrest control of the local prefecture from the armed group.

Meanwhile the Italian-led Multinational Protection Force (MPF) in Albania Friday turned down a request from the government to man frontier posts deserted by customs agents and maintain security on the country's main roads, the Albanian News Agency (ATA) reported.

Mr. Fino made the request in talks with MPF commander General Luciano Forlani.

"General Forlani did not agree to the MPF guarding frontier posts and roads because these activities are not part of its mandate," ATA said, quoting MPF spokesman Giovanni Bernardi.

But sources close to the MPF command said the multinational force would shortly extend its deployment over the whole country.

"It is desirable for the MPF troops to be deployed even in the remotest regions of Albania," said Mr. Fino in a statement published by his press service after the meeting with Gen. Forlani.

The government also urged "a more active involvement" on the part of the MPF in the legislative elections, notably with MPF soldiers present at polling centres.

"A more active involvement of MPF troops in making safe the main roads and Albanian Customs Services would allow a resumption of the economic activities the country so badly needs," Mr. Fino's statement said.

"We have not called for changes but for a more flexible interpretation of the multinational force's mandate in order to better adapt it to the reality of Albania," Mr. Fino said.

The 6,000-strong MPF was sent to Albania to protect the distribution of humanitarian aid.

Train carrying gas and acid derails near San Francisco

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — At least 19 cars of a train carrying gas residue and corrosive acid derailed late Friday near Martinez, California, forcing the evacuation of some homes in the area, authorities said.

Fire and Sheriff's Department officials at the scene said residents were being evacuated within a half-mile of the accident as a precaution.

PGE Corp.'s Pacific Gas and Electric Co. said it was asked by local authorities to cut off gas and electric service to homes in the immediate area.

"They don't want any possible source of ignition," PGE spokesman Lyle Lafaver said.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or leaks and the cause of the derailment was not immediately known.

The accident occurred at about 5:30 p.m. local time/8:30 p.m. EDT (0030 GMT Saturday) about 40 kilometres northeast of San Francisco. The two-locomotive, 60-car Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train was travelling to nearby Richmond, California, when it jumped the tracks.



A man yells anti-American slogans in front of the U.S. embassy in Kinshasa. Hundreds of Tshisekedi followers chanted anti-Kabila slogans and called for the pullout of Rwandan troops from his Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (Reuter photo)

Troops fire in air as Congo students protest

KINSHASA (R) — Troops in Kinshasa fired in the air Saturday and packed demonstrators into trucks to break up a march by about 1,000 students from Kinshasa University protesting against self-proclaimed President Laurent Kabila's new government.

State-run radio said a rival demonstration in support of Democratic Republic of Congo leader Kabila was also planned for later Saturday.

Most of the protesters panicked and scattered after two shots rang out. About 200 marched towards the Intercontinental Hotel where most leaders of Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) stay.

Troops then packed about 50 protesters into trucks and said they were taking them back to the campus, witnesses said.

"I am acting under orders," said the troop commander, who called himself John. He said former soldiers of ousted President Mobutu Sese Seko's army were among the protesters.

About 50 other marchers were made to sit by the roadside with their hands on their heads, under heavy guard by soldiers.

Witnesses said soldiers confiscated film from foreign journalists covering the demonstration.

The protest was the second in two days after Mr. Kabila excluded popular veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi from an incomplete government announced Thursday. Mr. Kabila also abolished the post of prime minister — which Mr. Tshisekedi claims for himself on the basis of a 1992 national conference, although he was sacked by Mr. Mobutu.

The students, who began their demonstration in the working class Matonge district, waved palm branches as a symbol of peaceful protest and carried placards emblazoned with anti-Kabila and anti-Rwandan slogans.

"We want the Rwandans to leave, Kabila has sold the country," said medical student Henri Olenga.

"Kabila must respect the law and the choice of the people, Tshisekedi is our prime minister," said law student Jean-Claude Tshamala.

The AFDL entered Kinshasa on May 17 after the flight of Mr. Mobutu, who dominated Africa's third largest country for more than three decades.

The seven-month rebellion which was triggered by ethnic Tutsi demanding citizenship has received military assistance from Rwanda's Tutsi-dominated army, Western intelligence sources and most Congolese people say.

Mr. Kabila's troops also fired shots in the air Friday in the capital to turn back a demonstration by a few hundred of Mr. Tshisekedi's supporters.

The march Saturday was much larger than an anti-Kabila demonstration Friday.

There were also street protests in the southern mining region of the former Zaire, with demonstrators denouncing the new government marching in the streets of the diamond mining centre of Mbuji-Mayi. Mr. Tshisekedi's central Kasai homeland Friday, residents said Saturday.

"There were lots of people demonstrating and troops fired into the air to disperse them," said one resident. The exact number of demonstrators was unclear.

Mbuji-Mayi was calm Saturday with businesses open. Pro-opposition newspapers expressed alarm at the defiant stand of the new rulers after Mr. Tshisekedi's fanatical supporters took to the streets of the capital Friday.

Mr. Kabila's government said Friday that because his AFDL won the rebel war it had the right to decide the future.

The Potentiel newspaper said the people of the new Congo were dismayed and fearful of a return to dictatorship.

"They see from the first political acts of the new rulers that we are heading towards a single party state," it said. "National opinion protests, and the legitimacy of the new president of the republic is already in question. Confidence is lost," it said.

After seven months of bush war to oust the cancer-stricken Mobutu, Foreign Minister Bizima Karaha called on him to return home with the money he stashed abroad during his 32 year rule, which the word "kleptocracy" was coined to describe.

"We are not ready to take nonsense from anyone for whatever reason, just to make sure people are happy. Liberty yes, but revolution first," Mr. Karaha told a news conference after Mr. Tshisekedi and his supporters denounced the alliance Friday.

Mr. Tshisekedi was the most stubborn political opponent of Mr. Mobutu and has a fanatical following in Kasai and Kinshasa.

Mr. Mobutu, weakened by cancer, arrived in Morocco Friday from Togo but an official in Rabat said Saturday he was expected to go on to France early next month.

"President Mobutu, who was welcomed by Morocco for humanitarian reasons, is expected to leave for France as his final destination at the beginning of June unless there are complications in his health," the official, who declined to be named, told Reuters.

Dostum's north Afghan town said fallen to foes

ISLAMABAD (R) — The northern Afghan town of Shibarghan, a stronghold of opposition leader General Abdul Rashid Dostum, fell to his opponents Saturday, a Pakistan-based Afghan news service said.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted sources in Afghanistan's Taliban Islamic militia as saying the town, capital of Jozjan province, was captured by anti-Dostum forces led by Taliban leader Abdul Razzaq, governor of Herat. There was no immediate independent confirmation of the report.

The report of Shibarghan's fall came hours after three jet fighters of Gen. Dostum's air force defected to his opponents, and only a day after Western reporters visited the town to find it calm.

The three aircraft were flown by deserters, defected Major General Yusef Shah told reporters in the Afghan capital Kabul.

Two planes — Soviet-built SU-22 fighter bombers — flew from Shibarghan to Maimana, capital of Faryab province, and one — an I39 Albatross jet trainer — was taken to Kabul.

"We feared that Dostum was trying to dismantle Afghanistan. More planes are expected to come over," Gen. Yusef, clean-shaven and wearing combat fatigues, told reporters gathered in the office of the head of the Taliban Air Force.

Maimana is held by Gen. Dostum's former foreign minister and deputy, General Abdul Malik, who launched a revolt against Gen. Dostum Monday.

"One of the pilots was Colonel General Hafeez, the head of (Dostum's) air force. They bombed Shibarghan Air Base on their way out," said Gen. Yusef.

It was not possible to confirm the bombings or the defections to Maimana.

Gen. Yusef said Saturday's defections meant that Gen. Dostum had lost more than a quarter of his air force.

"Dostum had four SU-22s, three MiG-21s, and four I39s before today, now he has lost three of them," he said.

Gen. Yusef said the Taliban and their new ally, Gen. Malik, faced Gen. Dostum's forces on a frontline some 15 kilometres from Shibarghan.

He said that Gen. Dostum's forces still held the town of Sar-i-Pul, but that the Taliban forces were within two kilometres of the town.

The opposition alliance led by Gen. Dostum, who has led the fight against the purist Islamic Taliban, was thrown into disarray by Gen. Malik's revolt Monday.

The revolt broke an 18-month deadlock on the front line in Badghis province.

The Taliban, who seized Kabul last September and control most of Afghanistan, now command all of Badghis and its eastern neighbour Faryab and are making inroads into Sar-i-Pul province.

Gen. Yusuf said Gen. Malik had defected because he "was paid by the Taliban and the ISI," Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence.

Getting adversaries to switch sides with the help of offers of money is considered to be standard practice in Afghanistan, whose new rulers, the Taliban, are said to be afloat with Saudi funds.

Pakistan is also said to be among the main backers of the Taliban. The Islamic "students" sprang out of religious schools based in the neighbouring country to the east.

Pakistan has indirectly welcomed the pro-Taliban uprising saying the new developments would lead to formation of a broadly representative government.

The reports came as Amnesty International urged the Taliban not to execute Ismael Khan, a former governor of western Herat province arrested in northwestern Badghis province following the rebellion Monday.

"There is a genuine fear that Ismael Khan may be ill-treated or even killed in the custody of the Taliban," the human rights group said in a statement faxed to Islamabad from London late Friday.

The statement urged the Taliban authorities "not to subject him to ill-treatment and not to execute him."

Reports quoting Taliban officials have said Mr. Khan would be tried by an Islamic court for killing "innocent" people.

The Taliban hanged former Communist President Najibullah and his brother soon after taking Kabul on Sept. 27 last year, accusing him of killing thousands of Afghans.

The Taliban has summoned Afghans studying in Koranic schools in Pakistan to reinforce its forces in northern Afghanistan, a Taliban spokesman said Saturday.

The students will be sent to various active frontlines, the spokesman, Wakil Ahmad, told AFP.

"A number of Afghan Taliban have crossed the border and are on their way," he said, without giving any figures. "Normally, we have called our students whenever we have needed them," he said.

Reports in Pakistani newspapers Saturday said hundreds of Taliban had gone to Afghanistan from religious schools in the country.

The Taliban, who seized Kabul in September last year, claim that their drive to capture the northern stronghold of Gen. Dostum has gained momentum.

Sources here said the Taliban coming from Pakistan would also be deployed on the frontlines off key Shihur Pass in central Afghanistan where the opposition Shite Hezb-i-Wahdat had stalled a major Taliban offensive.

The Taliban spokesman indicated that the fresh arrivals could also be used for military operations at Salang on the main highway to the north, about 85 kilometres from Kabul.

"Naturally we have to attack (rivals) from every direction," the spokesman said.

Violence mars end to Indonesian election campaign

JAKARTA (R) — Rioters torched a top hotel and attacked churches on Borneo Island and four people died on Java on the final day of Indonesia's general election campaign Friday, residents and news reports said Saturday.

The official Antara news agency said at least four people died in violence at Bangil in eastern Java.

One resident contacted by phone said the four people were killed during a clash between supporters of the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP) and security forces after the PPP attacked buildings in the town.

The resident said police fired warning shots, but it was not clear exactly how they had died. Police declined to comment.

Antara said 32 people had been treated for knife wounds, cuts and burns during rioting in Banjarmasin, capital of south Kalimantan province on the Indonesian side of Borneo.

Residents in Banjarmasin, a city of 400,000, said at least two people were killed but there was no immediate confirmation.

They said the violence started with fighting between supporters of the ruling Golkar and the PPP on the last day of campaigning for next Thursday's national and local elections.

The capital Jakarta and the satellite cities of Tangerang and Bekasi were also hit by street violence.

Antara reported other disturbances in Java, Indonesia's most populous island, at Solo and Semarang in the centre, Cirebon in the west as well as Bangil and Malang in the east. Ujung Pandang, capital of south Sulawesi province, also saw unrest.

There were no reports of trouble through the sprawling archipelago of 200 million people Saturday, the first day of a five-day cooling off period before the polls.

North Korean defector Hwang's wife and son under house arrest

TOKYO (Agencies) — The wife of North Korea's top ideologue Hwang Jang-Yop, now in rival South Korea, and their eldest son have been placed under house arrest in Pyongyang, a newspaper reported Saturday.

The Stalinist state, which usually sends the families of defectors to concentration camps, may have taken such a modest measure in order not to disrupt its overtures to the United States, the Asahi Shimbun daily said.

Quoting an informed source in Tokyo, the influential daily also reported that Hwang's two daughters were not facing any punitive measure.

Mr. Hwang's wife, Pak Sung-Ok, was taken into custody by security agents immediately after her husband sought political asylum at the South Korean embassy in Beijing on Feb. 22 on his way back from a lecture tour in Japan, the source said.

The son, Hwang Kyong-Mo, fled Pyongyang by his car toward Sinuiju on the Chinese border after learning about his father's defection but he was caught on the way, the source said.

Both of them have been since confined to Mr. Hwang's house in Pyongyang, the newspaper quoted the source as saying.

Mr. Hwang, 74, who was a secretary in the ruling Workers Party, arrived in Seoul a month ago after a stay in the Philippines. He is regarded as a potential information gold mine for the South about the secretive North.

He has publicly appealed to Pyongyang to give up its dreams of uniting the two Koreas through war and to save its starving population. But Pyongyang's mouthpiece media have written him off as a "mentally deranged common criminal."

The source said Pyongyang, which is seeking to improve ties with Washington, has taken a "relatively moderate measure" against Mr. Hwang's family to "head off criticism within the United States against human rights violations."

Analysts say Mr. Hwang's defection has hit the psyche of the famine-hit totalitarian state hard not only because he was a main

architect of North Korea's all-embracing dogma of "Juche (self-reliance)" but also his links to the family of the late President Kim Il-Sung.

Mr. Hwang is known as a mentor of Mr. Kim's eldest son and presumed successor Kim Jong-Il in the academic field.

His wife, who studied at Moscow University, once served as a tutor for the junior Kim's younger sister Kim Kyong-Hui, who heads an economic policy watchdog department of the ruling party.

Mr. Hwang's eldest son, 33, is a researcher at the academy of Juche studies and is married to a niece of Kim Kyong-Hui's husband Jang Song-Thaek, a key figure in the party organisation.

Meanwhile, the European Commission's top envoy to Seoul said Saturday, a day after the commission announced a huge food aid package, that the situation in North Korea is "very explosive."

"The situation is very explosive," Tue Rohrsted told a news conference. "Nobody knows whether it will explode or implode."

"There are clear signs of malnutrition, particularly among children," he said. There was a "crying need" for help for the elderly, and many hospitals had been forced to close as health care workers focused on their own survival.

"There's no medicine, no drugs, no food," said Mr. Rohrsted, who heads the delegation of the European Commission in Seoul.

On Friday, the European Commission said it was sending 155,000 tonnes of food worth 46.3 million ECUs (\$53.2 million) to North Korea, including rice, maize and vegetable oils.

This followed an agreement by the European Union Thursday to join an international consortium working to dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons programme by supplying the country with relatively safe nuclear reactors and interim fuel supplies.

By throwing its weight behind international food appeals and the nuclear initiative, the EU was signalling a new engagement with Asia, Mr. Rohrsted said.

Rebels hit back at advancing Sri Lankan troops

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan troops resumed an offensive against Tamil separatists Saturday, meeting stiff resistance as they pushed deeper into northern rebel-held territory, the Defence Ministry and military officials said.

The drive restarted at first light Saturday after troops paused for about five days to strengthen gains they made in a 14 kilometre thrust into the rebels' northern Wanni heartland.

Troops commenced the advance from the Omani area and confronted the terrorists in the area northeast of Omani. A Defence Ministry statement said.

"Having overcome the resistance, troops continued to advance further," the statement added.

Military officials in the north told Reuters that Liberation Tigers of Tamil

Eelam (LTTE) rebels put up stiff resistance just north of Omani, slowing down troops with barrages of artillery and mortar fire.

Two soldiers, including an officer, were killed in Saturday's fighting and more than 45 were wounded, they said.

Casualties suffered by the LTTE were not immediately known, but troops managed to inflict enough damage to the rebels to force them to pull back, the officials said.

Troops captured Omani, 14 kilometres north of the government-held town of Vavuniya, and Nedunkeni, 25 kilometre northeast of Vavuniya, last week after a two-pronged thrust into the mostly shrub-covered Wanni region.

Some 20,000 troops backed by tanks, artillery and air cover launched "Operation Jaya Sikuru," or

"Sure Of Victory," from Vavuniya on May 13 in a bid to open a supply route to the Jaffna peninsula, 100 kilometres further north. Vavuniya lies 220 kilometres north of the capital Colombo.

The LTTE, fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in mainly Sinhalese Sri Lanka's north and east, control vast swathes of land in the Wanni between Jaffna and Vavuniya.

Government forces rely on air and sea links to supply bases and civilians in the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE's former would-be homeland brought back under government control one year ago.

Military officials said up to 3,000 navy ground troops had been deployed in the Omani area to secure the region, allowing the army to resume its push north.

Other military officials said the rebels had launched a drive to collect blood in the eastern Batticaloa district, 200 kilometres from Colombo.

"It is quite possible the LTTE have moved their wounded, or plan to move their wounded from the fresh fighting, into the east for treatment," an official said.

According to Defence Ministry figures, 67 soldiers have been killed and 96 wounded in the offensive up to Thursday. Hospital sources have said some 600 soldiers had been wounded.

The LTTE said 59 rebels had died in the fighting up to last Thursday.

The government says more than 50,000 people have been killed in the ethnic war, now in its 14th year. The LTTE say the toll is higher.

Quebec leaders attacked in campaign ads

SAINT-HYACINTHE, Quebec (R) — Canada's French-speaking political leaders voiced anger Friday about a new pre-election ad that suggested Quebec-born politicians did not have what it takes to keep Quebec from leaving Canada.

The suggestion that where you are born should determine whether or not you should be prime minister of the country is to say the least offensive, a somber Jean Charest, leader of the Conservative Party, told reporters in Ottawa.

The ad, promoting the right-wing Reform Party, shows three French-speaking Canadian party leaders

prime minister and Liberal leader Jean Chretien — along with Quebec premier and leading separatist Lucien Bouchard.

As the ad calls for "a voice for all Canadians, not just Quebec politicians," the images of the four Quebecers are circled in red and then each face is crossed out.

Canada has had Quebec prime ministers for 19 of the last 20 years — Quebec has a crucial one-quarter of the population — and Mr. Chretien led Canada in an October 1995 referendum that Quebec sovereignists lost by only one point.

Three of the five political leaders contesting the June

2 election are from Quebec: Charest, Chretien and the leader of the separatist Bloc Quebecois, Gilles Duceppe.

Aside from reform's Preston Manning, from the west, the New Democratic Party's Alexa McDonough is the only non-Quebecer to lead a major political party in this campaign.

"Mr. Manning is setting a very bad example," the normally upbeat Charest said, looking troubled. "He's sending a message here that one part of the country doesn't count."

Mr. Chretien declared in Niagara Falls: "I want to tell Mr. Manning that people don't like his divisiveness."

Mr. Manning, who advocates decentralisation to please both Quebec and other provinces, contends the traditional parties have failed to devise a method to keep Canada together.

"The separatists do damage by what they do. The old-line federalists do damage by what they do not do, the plan that they do not have, the alternative model they do not have for the next referendum."

"We're saying each is equally dangerous in its own way to the unity of the country."

But Mr. Manning — running second in the polls outside Quebec — has no voter base in Quebec.

2 die in Dallas military helicopter crash

HUTCHINS, Texas (R) — A U.S. Marine Corps Super Cobra helicopter crashed and hurt into flames near a south east Dallas school Friday, killing its two crew members, a Marine spokesman said.

Witnesses and police said the Marine Corps AB11W helicopter narrowly missed at least one house as it went out of control and crashed into a field in the Dallas suburb of Hutchins.

Names of the two crew members were not released, pending notification of relatives, said Maj.

Dave Lapan, of Marine Corps headquarters in Washington.

The aircraft was based at the Marine Corps Air Station in New River, N.C., Maj. Lapan said in a telephone interview.

Investigators were on the scene and others were en route to begin an investigation Saturday, according to Maj. Lapan, who put the cost of the helicopter at \$10.7 million.

Local residents reported hearing explosions seconds after the helicopter crashed.

"The fire was so intense, no survivors could be discerned," police Lt. Charles Epperson said.

Fire teams raced to the scene and put out the blaze as police sealed off the area less than 1.6 kilometres from the intersection of two major highways.

Witnesses said the helicopter almost slammed into a house as it came down and credited the pilot with preventing a disaster.

"It was right over the house so whoever was piloting it is a hero in my book because he could have killed us all," local resident Velva Washburn said.

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GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:

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Searching for way out

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's talks with President Hosni Mubarak and the flurry of talks scheduled this week among Mideastern leaders reflect the urgency by which those leaders view the current status of the peace negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track. President Mubarak came to Jordan to brief the King on the "Egyptian initiative" to revive the peace process and to solicit his backing and his active involvement with both parties.

Even though very little is known about the Egyptian efforts to end the deadlock, the recent contacts between President Mubarak and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appear to have succeeded in establishing a new base for resuming peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian side. In preparation for the Sharm Al Sheikh meeting Tuesday between the Egyptian president and the Israeli prime minister, Egyptian officials are conducting high pitch talks in Israel to finalise an agreement on the agenda for the meeting. Cairo has recently floated the idea of freezing all Israeli settlement plans in Palestinian areas for at least six months during which final status talks could be started. Had Egypt not received a positive signal from Israel, it is doubtful that President Mubarak would have consented to holding a summit with the Israeli leader.

It, therefore, appears that a compromise between the Palestinian and Israeli positions is now being ironed out by Egyptian envoy Osama Al Baz. The fact that there is already an agreement to hold the Sharm Al Sheikh meeting suggests that sufficient progress has been already attained in the preparatory talks. There is doubt then that King Hussein can lend valuable support to the ongoing efforts to end the stand-off between Israel and the Palestinians as President Mubarak indicated yesterday. It was the King's personal intervention that rescued the tortuous negotiations on Hebron from imminent failure. A joint Jordanian-Egyptian effort at this critical juncture in the peace process would go a long way to convince Israel that its views on the fundamentals of peace need an urgent review and reconsideration. As U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk recently remarked there is an urgent need to return to the core bargain of Oslo in order to save the process from disintegrating. That bargain, as had been translated by the previous Labour government of Israel and ratified by the recent party congress envisaged the emergence of a Palestinian state and a settlement in Jerusalem satisfactory for both peoples. What the current Israeli leadership did so far is change the rules of the game which subsequently led to the current crisis. The Palestinian leadership feels, and rightly so, that if Mr. Netanyahu continued to pursue his policies, there is nothing to negotiate for. It is therefore up to the Israeli leader to convince them, and everybody else, that that is not the case.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily Saturday welcomed reports about a rapprochement between Syria and Iraq and the reopening of their common border for travel and trade as a long awaited step in the right direction. The visit of a Syrian trade team to Baghdad last week and the conclusion of several trade agreements are signs of the beginning of a new chapter in the two countries' relations, said Mahmoud Rimawi. These reports coincide with a new Turkish invasion of northern Iraq, with Ankara declaring that its intention is to stem the attacks on its territory by the Kurdistan Labour Party. Mahmoud Rimawi pointed out. But the Syrians and the Iraqis must have realised the danger posed to them by this invasion, which is backed by the U.S. and Israel, the new military ally of Ankara, and thus they are now joining hands in the face of this common danger, he noted. The writer said that the time has come for Syria to end the sanctions on Iraq by opening its borders to its eastern neighbour and trying to persuade the Gulf states and Iran to follow suit in order to thwart the U.S.-backed Israeli-Turkish alliance which is aimed at besieging the Arab World and weakening its power in the face of Israel's continued aggression on the Arab Nation. By opening the border with Iraq, Syria would be reviving solidarity among Arab states, benefiting from trade with Baghdad and alleviating the sufferings of the Iraqi people, according to the writer. He said such a step is of paramount importance at a time when the peace process is being wrecked and Israel is consolidating its hold on the occupied Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian lands.

TAHER AL Adwan, a writer for Al Arab Al Yawm daily, suggested that the Jordan Press Association and the government open a dialogue to resolve the dispute which emerged after the introduction of the amendments to the Press and Publications Law. He said that only through dialogue and through the adoption of a code of honour by journalists can their problems be solved because such a code would serve as a guard against any breach of media ethics and can prevent further excesses on the part of the weeklies. The writer said journalists were right to protest the introduction of the new amendments in the absence of Parliament and without any consultations with their association and they were right to consider these amendments as drastically lowering the ceiling of public freedoms and free expression. At least the Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Muawwi could have discussed the amendments with the journalists as a last resort, said the writer, because had he done that, none of the protests and the open disputes would have surfaced.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Jordan needs a nuclear plant for its needs of water and electric power

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

LAST WEEK, Dr. Duraid Mahasneh, secretary general of the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) was talking to the press about the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal as a project vital to supplying Jordan with energy and water.

However, Jordanian officials are offering discouraging figures regarding the cost of implementing the project, estimated to be in the order of \$4 billion, which is almost double the estimate that was in circulation only two years ago.

It is obvious that the Kingdom does not have that kind of money, and that the suggested astronomical figure is beyond the capacity of our domestic savings, as well as beyond our ability to borrow externally. Therefore, the implementation of the Red Sea-Dead Sea project becomes next to impossible under the current circumstances, especially when the Palestinian side, which stands to benefit from part of the water produced by the project, is not in a position to actively participate or to contribute in any substantial manner towards its financing.

The Israeli side, on the other hand, is not showing sufficient interest or enthusiasm towards the idea, and is said

to be considering alternative options, such as building the canal from the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea without requiring the participation or the cooperation of neither Jordan nor the Palestinian Authority.

Under these circumstances, Jordan's needs of water will continue to increase even after receiving the additional quantity of water which Israel is committed to supply to Jordan under the peace treaty and which amounts to no more than 5 per cent of the Kingdom's overall annual consumption of water.

At the same time, Jordan's need of electricity is growing at rates much higher than the growth rates of the gross domestic product (GDP), this presenting the country with another strategic problem because there is no guarantee that the Iraqi oil shipments will continue to flow for ever to Jordan at rebated prices, as has been the case for the past seven years.

Therefore, Jordan must search for a large-scale source of water and energy, as the additional small dams which may be built here and there would not solve the water shortage problem, and continuing to generate electricity by using imported fuel may prove to be too costly in the near

future. A possible alternative is nuclear technology, which can supply Jordan with all its present and future needs of energy and, at the same time, help the process of desalination of huge amounts of water and provide the necessary power to pump the water to the consumers.

Jordan is also in real need of a nuclear reactor for peaceful and scientific use. This project is long overdue. U.S. President Carter donated two nuclear reactors, to Egypt and Israel, on the occasion of signing a peace treaty at Camp David. Perhaps President Clinton could do the same and give Jordan a reactor for training and other peaceful purposes.

I understand that a nuclear station in Aqaba, to generate electricity and help the water desalination, is a costly project, but it is worth studying, especially when such projects are eligible for long-term financing from the World Bank. The study may find that nuclear power is the most economical option to satisfy Jordan's present and future needs, to secure water and energy self-sufficiency at a reasonable cost and, perhaps, make Jordan an exporter of electricity.

Euro-American alliance should deepen as it expands

By Vaclav Havel

PRAGUE — As I follow the debate over whether NATO should be enlarged, I have the strong sense that the arguments are often purely mechanical, somehow missing the real meaning of the alliance. The process of expansion must be accompanied by something much deeper: a refined definition of the purpose, mission and identity of NATO.

The alliance should urgently remind itself that it is first and foremost an instrument of democracy to defend mutually held and created political and spiritual values. It must see itself not as a pact of nations against a more or less obvious enemy, but as a guarantor of Euro-American civilisation and thus as a pillar of global security.

Yet the arguments of many participants in the NATO debate, especially those who oppose admitting new members, froze up somewhere in the days of the cold war. The subtle, instinctive transfer of the old way of thinking into the present is perhaps even more dangerous than the endurance of the clearly anachronistic idea of two powerful systems at war.

For decades, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact were NATO's opponents. But the threat was not dangerous because it was Russian. It was dangerous because it was Communist and totalitarian.

Still, it would be preposterous to believe that after the fall of Communism and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, over which I presided in Prague, there were no longer threats to Euro-Atlantic values of freedom and democracy.

The danger is not coming from the present government in Moscow. The real threats today are those such as local conflicts fuelled by aggressive nationalism, terrorism and the potential misuse of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction.

As the case of Bosnia has shown, NATO — with American leadership — is the only consolidated force capable of effectively confronting such threats while offering other countries, including Russia, an opportunity to cooperate in defusing them.

Certain ways of thinking, which involve clinging to the stereotypical image of a NATO-Russia dichotomy, keep us from being able to stand up to such threats.

Some people simply want to continue fighting the cold war and consider the Russians their chief enemy; they see the threat of Russia as the reason to enlarge NATO.

Others, citing the end of the cold war, in effect think along the same lines when they say, "Let's not enlarge NATO because it might irritate the Russians," or "Let's not enlarge NATO because Russia is not a threat anymore."

All of them have something in common: their thinking is deeply rooted in the bipolar world of the past, and they grossly underestimate the variety of dangers that exist for democracy, peace and freedom in the Euro-Atlantic region and elsewhere in the world.

If this way of thinking prevails, the alliance into a hopelessly antiquated club of cold war veterans.

Moreover, if NATO fails to live up to the new purpose I am describing, it will encourage some countries — perhaps even including some inside the alliance — to return to the kind of unfortunate situation that existed before NATO, when the most powerful nations divided Europe into spheres

of influence and negotiated the regimes that would rule.

History proves that such dealings with sovereign states, as if they were commodities subject to trade, lead to conflict, as was painfully experienced by Czechoslovakia under the Munich agreement of 1938.

For that reason, it will not work to have NATO's enlargement decided by some kind of summit meeting of superpowers — selected NATO member states and Russia. This approach also contradicts NATO's fundamental principle of full equality among members.

That principle has enabled members of the alliance to eliminate centuries-old conflicts, developing and cultivating common values in cooperation, thus producing greater stability. The opportunity to make decisions about common defence should — not be denied a priori to countries that have embraced and advanced Euro-American political and cultural values. Some of the candidates for NATO membership have undergone pain for the sake of these values and have proved willing to protect them, as in the Gulf war and Bosnia.

A security vacuum in Central Europe exists and could arouse unnecessary temptation among nationalists and those who suspect of nostalgia for power blocs and regional dominance. As I have said many times, if the West does not stabilise the East, the East will destabilise the West. If principles of democracy win in the East, the peace and stability of all Europe will be ensured.

So NATO expansion should be perceived as a continuous process in which the nations of Central and Eastern Europe mature towards the meaning, values and goals of the enlarged and revived alliance.

Seven years ago, when I spoke before the U.S. Congress, I said that if the Americans wanted to help the Central Europeans, they should first of all help the Soviet Union. In principle this remains true. Many of NATO's tasks could and should be undertaken with Russia as a partner.

But such a partnership with Russia must not seek to restrict the sovereign rights of Central European countries or Russia's neighbours to decide on membership in security organisations. Nor must it restrict the alliance's decisions to

act.

An enlarged NATO should consider Russia a partner. A new democratic Russia and a revived NATO can actively and quite naturally pursue constructive cooperation in solving concrete problems. After all, they face common threats.

Russia and NATO, for example, have an interest in preventing misuse of nuclear weapons. And there is always the possibility of new, not yet fully recognised tectonic cracks in the security map of the world.

But Russia is nonetheless a Eurasian superpower, so influential that it is hard to imagine that it could become an intrinsic part of NATO without flooding the alliance with the busy agenda of Russian interests.

Perhaps we have not yet progressed enough in redefining the mission and identity of NATO. I believe that expanding the alliance will be a step forward. Not only will it require serious consideration of the purpose and meaning of the alliance, but there will be more of us to take part in this reappraisal.

The writer is president of the Czech Republic. The article above is reprinted from The New York Times.

'It will take another generation or two, but the old racist games are over'

By Gwynne Dyer

JUST UNDER three-quarters of the present American population (73.1 per cent) is classified as "non-Hispanic white" by the U.S. Census Bureau. But within fifty years, it predicts, white Americans will be barely half the population (52.8 per cent); 13.6 per cent of Americans will be black (about the same as now). Asians will double to 8.2 per cent, and most of the rest will be Hispanic.

The U.S. Census Bureau is almost certainly wrong. The man who has it right is Tiger Woods, the 21-year-old golfer who electrified the United States by winning the Masters tournament — and then outraged practically everybody by announcing on the Oprah Winfrey show that he does not see himself as "black," but as "Cablinasian".

It is a word that describes what may be the largest American "race" by 2050: a mixed-race group in various shades of light brown that combines the genetic heritage of most major groups on the planet. Canada promises to be an even more comprehensive mixture, and Australia and even Britain are moving in the same direction.

Woods made the word "Cablinasian" up because he had no word to describe himself. His father had one white, one native Indian and two black grand-par-

ents, and his mother was half Chinese, half Thai. "Growing up, I came up with this name — I am a Cablinasian," Woods explained — a mix of Caucasian, black, Indian and Asian.

Sounds exotic. But in the heart of the "West," it is less exotic all the time. Quite suddenly, the old racial barriers have dropped, and racial inter-marriage has taken off.

In Britain, a stunning 30 per cent of people of West Indian origin under the age of thirty who are married or in a long-term relationship have a white partner. And public opinion supports the change: well over two thirds of Britons strongly disapproved of mixed marriages as recently as 1958, while now just over a quarter would object even if close relatives were involved.

The rate of inter-marriage is lower among British Asians, maybe because most of them are Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs for whom religious differences are an extra barrier to inter-marriage. But just go into the schools in big British cities and you can see the scale of the ethnic mixing that is happening — and this is in a country with only 7 per cent foreign-born in its population.

In Canada, where 20 per cent of the population is foreign-born, the process seems even more advanced. One Saturday

night recently I stood on the corner of Robson and Howe in downtown Vancouver and watched for a quarter-hour. I estimate that between a third and a quarter of the young couples who passed by were multi-racial.

The United States has far fewer recent immigrants (only 8 per cent of the population is foreign-born), and its unique past as the only industrialised country where slavery was once a major domestic institution has cursed it with an obsession about race. But even in America, the racial walls are breaking down.

Only 4 per cent of U.S. marriages are inter-racial, but that figure conceals a huge generational shift. In the 40s and 50s, less than 2 per cent of black men married white women. In the past decade, the figure has soared to nearly 10 per cent. And other non-white Americans, who do not suffer the special prejudice that weighs on African-American descendants of former slaves, are now "marrying out" at a staggering rate.

Some 60 per cent of Asian-born Americans in their 20s marry somebody of another race, and nearly 70 per cent of native American Indians under the age of 25 are doing the same. "In recent years the proportion of both men and women from all racial groups who 'marry out' has increased," concluded

University of Michigan demographer Reynolds Farley in a study published last month.

The "melting pot" is finally working, even in the U.S. Why?

There are many previous examples of widespread racial mixing. Most people in northern India are descendants of long-ago unions between Aryan (white) invaders and the darker previous inhabitants. Many West Indian "blacks" (and most American "blacks") actually carry the genes of former slave-owners as well as former slaves.

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In South Africa, there is a whole people, the Coloureds, who come from the mixing of Europeans, Malays (actually Indonesians), the Bushman/Hottentot original inhabitants and black Africans, in the early days of the Cape Colony. But all these cases of inter-marriage just led to the draw-

ing of new distinctions, for they were all based on relationships of unequal power.

The caste system in India probably arose as a strategy for combating the racial mixing that was undermining the conquerors' cohesiveness and power — and over three thousand years later Indian newspapers still carry advertisements by people seeking spouses who are "light" in colour.

In the West Indies, the class system is colour-coded even more sharply. Jamaica has yet to have a prime minister who looks at all African. White

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in the Cape, 300 years ago, was aborted by dividing it on the crude basis on skin colours: "white" and "black".

Afrikaans-speaking Protestants (who owned everything), and "coloured" Afrikaans-speaking Protestants and Muslims (who did what they were told).

But the current phenomenon is different because the new inter-racial links are voluntary and equal. The most significant bit of data about the new inter-racial marriage is this: White American women who have served in the U.S. armed forces are seven times more likely to marry black American males than civilian white women.

Why? In the U.S. armed forces, almost uniquely in American society, a very large minority of blacks lives and works alongside other races in a genuinely non-racist institutions. Since many blacks are long-service professionals, they also have high status. And that is all it takes to overcome the centuries of prejudice.

It was never really about colour. It was always about power. People like Tiger Woods, born of inter-racial relationships in a society with egalitarian values, will not submit to being sorted by the shade of their skins. It will take another generation or two, but the old racist games are over — and the future is light brown.

'Favoured' Indian dedicates himself to stamping out child exploitation

By Andrew Hindle

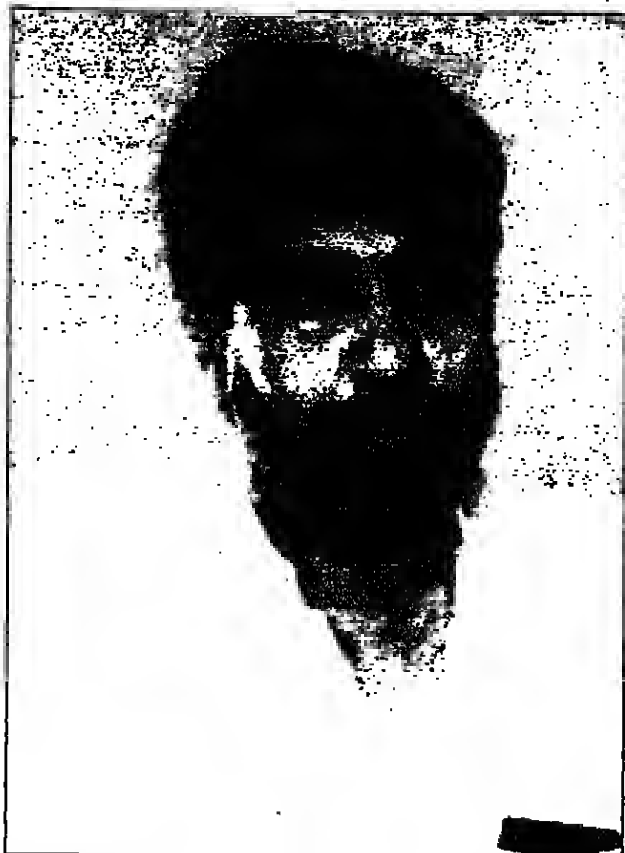
FOR SOMEONE who is allocated a 24-hour armed guard from the Indian government because of the almost daily threats to his life, Kailash Satyarthi seems remarkably at ease. A gently spoken man of 43, he has dedicated his life to the eradication of child slavery, an immense task given that he estimates that 200 million children around the world are being deprived of their freedom, childhood, education and play by unscrupulous employers.

A recent report by Christian Aid has highlighted the plight of children in India, some as young as seven, who are employed in the making of sports goods for export. Boys of 10 were found to be working in tanneries to produce leather for cricket and boxing gloves; girls, including a blind girl of 11, were stitching football and rugby balls for as little as 12p a day.

A third of these goods are exported to Britain. Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, has said that she intends to strengthen British support for the International Labour Organisation's international programme on eliminating child labour and for other, similar, programmes. Kailash Satyarthi's South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS) is one such programme, dedicated to rescuing child labourers and publicising their plight.

Kailash's concern for deprived children began when he was a child. At the age of five or six he used to see a cobbler and his son working outside his school, polishing the school-children's shoes. Kailash questioned why he and his friends went to school but not the shoe-boy. He asked his teachers, but they never gave him satisfactory answers. So he asked the shoe-boy's father, who was taken aback by the enquiry. He replied that no one had ever questioned him before, and that none of his family had ever been to school. He simply accepted that they were born to work.

Kailash, born into the favoured Brahmin caste, still had trouble understanding why he had privileges. On one occasion he



Kailash Satyarthi

was walking to school in the rain, carrying his umbrella. He noticed and was appalled to see the cobbler beating his son. Kailash caught the crying boy's hand and asked the father why he was beating him. The cobbler told him that their shoes were damaged because his son had covered himself with the plastic sheet intended for the shoes. "Doesn't the boy have the right to protect himself in the rain?" Kailash asked. "What is the cost, shoes or health?" The cobbler began to weep and hugged his son. Kailash gave the boy his umbrella.

As he tells it, this incident imprinted itself on Kailash's mind. During his university days he rejected the discriminatory social structures of the caste system and gave himself the new name of Satyarthi, meaning "truth seeker." After studying to become an engineer, he changed his career course to journalism and became editor of a fortnightly Hindi journal, "The Struggle Shall Continue". During the mid-seventies and early eighties the magazine campaigned on human rights activities, in the course of which the extent of bonded labour, forced labour and child slavery became clear.

Satyarthi and his colleagues realised that writing articles created awareness but had a limited effect; they yearned to do something more profound and active. SACCS was founded to start high-profile action. The organisation began to accumulate accurate information to persuade Indians of the existence of child slavery.

The work was highly dangerous, and still is. Raids were mounted to rescue children from servitude and slavery. Satyarthi was beaten up more than once, and two members were killed. Although the raids were highly successful in rescuing children, they were frustrated at seeing ever-increasing numbers of children being duped and kidnapped into slavery. Alternative action was required, so Satyarthi embarked on a media campaign abroad.

His message to the buyers of carpets made by children, in bondage was that "those who buy such carpets are responsible for thrashing the backs of children." SACCS has rescued many child slaves, some through direct intervention and raids, others through the courts. It has also established centres that provide comprehensive support and build children's self-confidence.

One such specialised project is Mukti Ashram, a vocational rehabilitation centre on the outskirts of northern Delhi. The word mukti implies liberation — physical, mental and spiritual. Basic literacy, health, hygiene, social and vocational training are provided. For many of the youngsters it is also a first opportunity to experience and enjoy childhood.

The children have disturbing stories to tell. Nageshwar, a 14-year-old boy, attended the ashram for six months. He had been tortured after helping other enslaved children to escape from a factory. He was seized by the owner, who burnt and scarred him with a red-hot iron bar. During his first month at the ashram he was unable to speak. The staff were distressed by the boy's injuries and mental state, but their care and dedication gave him hope. He has now returned to his home in Bihar state.

Part of the children's rehabilitation involves educational training on the dangers of child labour. The children are then encouraged to preach on the perils and risks of servitude when they return to their villages.

Rajan, an ex-pupil of Mukti Ashram, delivered such a speech in his home village. He was then approached by the parents of two boys who had been kidnapped into slavery. Rajan's response was to visit the local police, who scoffed at his suggestions. The brave lad then took matters into his own hands. He spoke to the carpet factory owner, stating that he was hungry, needed work and had experience of working in the carpet industry. He was duly recruited, and worked for 10 days planning an escape with the two boys. He succeeded, and immediately made the long and arduous journey to Delhi by various buses, having borrowed the fare from his family beforehand. The staff at the ashram were delighted by the boys' bravery. The two boys were reunited with their families, and then returned to the ashram for rehabilitation.

Although bonded labour was legally abolished in India in 1976, the practice continues to be widespread. Government tolerance of

violators resulted in Satyarthi making the subject a political issue. A parliamentary forum on child servitude ensued, chaired by a former president of India, Giani Zail Singh. Candidates in recent Indian elections were requested by SACCS to pledge themselves to the eradication of child servitude and the provision of free education to all children.

Satyarthi and his colleagues maintain that child servitude perpetuates India's unemployment problems by keeping chil-

dren in jobs that could be held by adults. "Those bonded children get no money," he has said. "If they were not used, the manufacturers would be obliged to hire adults, who are easier to organise and unionise and who would demand fair wages and better conditions."

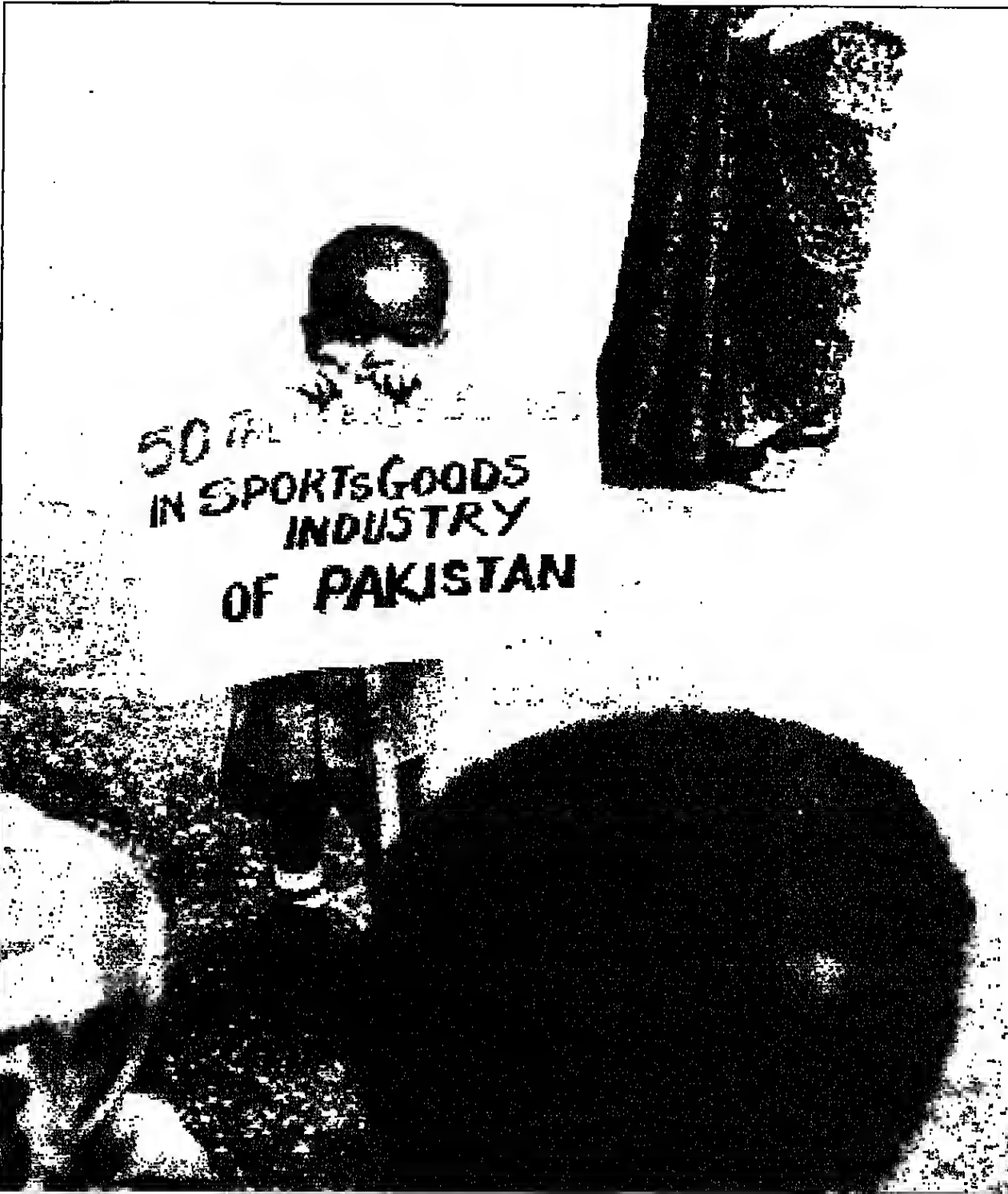
SACCS mobilises national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and public opinion to pressure governments, manufacturers and importers to end child labour. It also serves as the

coordinating organisation for 250 other NGOs (including UNICEF), and trade unions throughout Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) faces the enormous task of organising governments, employers and trade unions to secure agreements on industry-wide standards that prevent exploitation of children and "ban other employment practices which are incompatible with human rights and labour standards."

Changing attitudes is paramount to the eradication of child slavery, but the struggle for SACCS is hampered by certain governments diverting the issue, ineffective officials and a trading community determined "to distort the magnitude of the problem with misleading propaganda or cosmetic touches." But for Satyarthi, the mission remains clear: "It has been our humble endeavour to sensitise the masses on this anguishing question."

The Independent



Child taking part in one of the protests organised by Kailash Satyarthi's South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude in New Delhi (AP photos)

China tea lovers hope to revive ancient culture

By Scott Hillis
Reuters

BEIJING — For Zhou Yan, the cup and the kettle are more than just the components of a refreshing drink of tea, they are a way of life.

While not all of China's hundreds of millions of drinkers of "cha" — Chinese for tea — see in the biter leaves a path to enlightenment, the old and nearly forgotten culture is gradually being revived by a growing club of the educated and wealthy.

Ms. Zhou, a young acolyte of China's ancient tea ceremonies that seek aesthetic or personal perfection through ritual preparation of the drink, displayed her craft at the opening of an up-scale tea-house aimed at reviving the ancient art.

"We want to use the tea ceremony to express the traditions of Chinese tea culture," said Ouyang Xu, general manager of the Guofeng Group that started the two million yuan (\$241,000) Minghui Tea Garden on the outskirts of Beijing.

At the opening of the garden in a remote and quiet temple, Ms. Zhou and two other tea disciples demonstrated for visitors an intricate Buddhist ceremony similar to tea rites practised in Japan's Zen sect, known as "chan" in Chinese.

"Tea is a classic example of reflecting the spiritual world through material life," said Wang Ling, a

member of the China International Tea Culture Research Committee, after viewing the ceremony.

Ancient Chinese schools of thought had found expression through the simple act of drinking tea. Ms. Wang said.

The mystical Taoists saw a union between man and nature. Buddhists sought personal enlightenment and Confucian thinkers sought to promote social harmony through proper forms of sharing tea with others, she said.

"The tea culture is not simply drinking a beverage like cola or coffee, it is a pleasure of a cultured life," she said.

Dressed in the brown and yellow robes of a Chan nun, Ms. Zhou used a simple copper kettle and a coal brazier to prepare cups of tea, using arcane hand gestures intended to guide participants down a path of meditation and self-perfection.

"Moral improvement through the tea ceremony is a gradual process for me," said Ms. Zhou, 20, who has studied and performed the Chan rites and other tea ceremonies for four years at a tea museum in the eastern city of Hangzhou in the heart of tea-growing Zhejiang province.

"My future path will definitely lie with tea," she said.

China's army of tea growers has little time to spare for the intricate trappings of dreamy tea philosophy as they struggle to make prof-

its in a chaotic and changeable market.

"International tea prices are sliding and the tea market in China has not been so good," said Xu Fangyun, head of the Lingyun County high-grade tea farm in southern Guangxi region.

Government controls on exports and backward management of China's thousands of state-run farms mean many tea growers have been unable to adjust to nearly two decades of market-style economic reforms, Mr. Xu told reporters recently.

Industry analysts have said spiralling production costs and falling prices have left more than 80 per cent of China's tea producers in the red.

"Because we're in a market economy, we have to rely on the enterprises themselves to make changes," Mr. Xu said. "We must rely on our reputation to get more market share."

Mr. Xu admitted he had never read China's tea drinking bible "The Classic of Tea", written in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), but said he knows enough about tea to keep his business afloat.

Mr. Xu's firm makes five grades of tea with prices ranging from 26 yuan per kg (2.2 lb) up to 6,000 yuan a kg for a special seasonal tea made from the plant's early buds, 40,000 of which are needed to make one kg, he said.

"We sold everything we made last year," he said. China's tea output was

estimated at 510,000 tonnes in 1996 after slipping five per cent in 1995 to 502,000 tonnes, official figures show. Chinese bought 7.2 billion yuan of tea in 1996.

Minghui's Ouyang, a 30-year-old alumnus of Beijing University, said he hoped his venture would revive interest in tea traditions but acknowledged it was not for everyone.

"Our clientele are going to be more educated, high-income people," he said.

The price of enjoying a Cuppa at Minghui, whose refined and tidy environment is in stark contrast to the riotous, low-brow tea-houses of southern China, can be high.

"You can pay a few dozen yuan (a few dollars) for a pot, or depending on the kind of tea and room you want, you can spend more than 1,000 yuan," Mr. Ouyang said.

He was confident China's growing affluence would make more people interested in and financially able to explore their cultural heritage.

"If we opened a tea-house in the city, we could get more customers but would be unable to bring out the essence of the tea," he said.

Xu Fangyun, general manager of the Lingyun County High-Grade Tea Farm in China's southern region of Guangxi, shows off a leaf of his farm's product (Reuters photo)



Fariz expects Jordan to continue recording good growth rates in '97

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Jordan's economy is expected to perform well in 1997 as the country pushes ahead with economic reforms and its debt burden declines, Jordan's Central Bank governor said in press comments Saturday.

Ziyad Fariz said Jordan was stepping up measures to privatise industrial institutions as part of economic reforms it launched several years ago in line with an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"The economy will continue to record good growth rates this year. It is expected to be around 6.56 per cent while inflation rates will remain under control as they will not exceed four per cent compared with six per cent last year," he told

the United Arab Emirates economic weekly Al Eqtisadi.

Dr. Fariz also reported improvement in the balance of payments, the barometer of economic performance by IMF standards. He said the payments gap would drop to around two per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of \$7.1 billion.

Jordan's reserves have also doubled over the past few years and are expected to exceed \$1 billion in 1997.

"It is hoped this improvement will continue as the government is carrying out more privatisations. It is planning to intensify such measures this year with the privatisation of various industrial establishments," Dr. Fariz said.

He estimated Jordan's

debt, one of the key factors that prompted the IMF request for reforms, at between \$6 billion and \$7 billion.

He said the debt had sharply fallen from 200 per cent of the GDP in 1989 to less than 90 per cent in 1996. Debt servicing was also slashed to around 17 per cent of the annual exports from 40 per cent in the same period.

"We expect a further decline in the debt in future as a result of government efforts to write off part of the debt and take measures to cut it, especially through exchanging debt for investments," the minister said.

He said Jordan hoped to reach an agreement with its creditors in the Paris Club to reschedule part of its debt when they meet next

month.

"The economic reform programmes have given us credibility with our creditors," he said. "The United States has written off \$270 million of our debts to it while there will be talks with Japan for debt-rescheduling."

Dr. Fariz said Jordan's unemployment problem had persisted although it had declined from 18 to 12 per cent. He said such a level remained high but added there would be measures to push the rate down.

Regarding remittances from Jordanian expatriate workers, a key source of income for Amman, he estimated them at \$1.7 billion in 1996 while earnings from tourism stood at \$700 million.

Arab Gulf states face lower oil prices in '97

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states are set to lose the gains of 1997 as the oil market begins to reel under extra Iraqi crude supplies and quota violations by some OPEC producers, experts have said.

Oil prices have lost more than \$6 since they shot above \$24 in January and they will likely remain weak in the next few months due to excess supplies and slackening seasonal demand.

"There is no doubt Gulf countries cannot expect another strong performance by the oil market this year as was the case last year," said Mohammad Al Asumi, chief economist at the state-run Emirates Industrial Bank.

"The prolonged cold spell in the western hemisphere of last year did not happen again this year and market supplies are on the increase," he added.

Reopening its oil taps for the first time in more than six years, sanction-hit Iraq started to pump around 550,000 barrels

per day (bpd) of crude in December when oil prices were as high as \$23-\$24.

The exports were in line with an agreement with the United Nations allowing Iraq, under crippling sanctions since it invaded Kuwait in 1990, to sell \$2 billion worth of crude every six months to buy food and medicine for its people.

But supplies are gradually increasing as prices fall to below \$18 and could slip further in the third quarter, oil analysts said.

"The fact that the deal with Iraq was mentioned by its value rather than the quantity of crude has created uncertainty in the oil market formula," said Nicolas Sarkis, director of the Paris-based Arab Oil Institute.

"Iraq pumped around 550,000 bpd when oil prices were nearly \$23."

In the second week of April, prices declined to below \$17, meaning Iraqi crude supplies

will reach 700,000 bpd."

Mr. Sarkis wrote in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) economic weekly Emirates Today.

"If prices continue their decline to \$16, the Iraqi crude supplies will rise to nearly 760,000 bpd. This will further weaken the market," he said.

Oil prices averaged more than \$20 in the first quarter of 1997 but are expected to remain below that level in the second and third quarters.

Experts attributed this to growing Iraqi crude supplies and persistent overproduction by some members of the 11-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), namely Venezuela and Nigeria.

Independent estimates showed OPEC's actual production in April stood at around two million bpd above its nominal ceiling of 25.033 million bpd.

Gulf oil giants Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, which

control nearly 45 per cent of the world's recoverable crude resources, have remained committed to their quotas apparently fearing a price collapse could badly hurt their budgets, which are already reeling under large deficits.

Oil prices stood at \$20 in 1996, their highest level since the oil boom of early 1980s. Analysts said they expected prices to be lower by nearly \$2 in 1997 but they are expected to pick up in the last quarter, when demand improves and consumers buy more oil to replenish their inventories.

In his first press comments since he took over in March, UAE Oil Minister Obaid Ben Saif Al Nasiri said prices would range between \$19 and \$20 in the last quarter. He said such a level was acceptable.

The oil price surge in 1996 boosted the income of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the UAE — which make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — by nearly \$12 billion to \$80 billion.

As oil sales provide more than two thirds of their income, the extra earnings boosted their economies and enabled them to cut budget deficits.

"At current supply levels of around 11.5 million bpd and an average price of \$18, the GCC revenues will be around \$75 billion," a UAE banker said. "This is lower than in 1996 but higher than the previous years."

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The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6365	0.6329	0.6557	110.36	136.36	163.63	166.67	200.48
DE Mark	0.6050	1.0000	0.3756	0.3930	63.76	79.36	99.36	101.81	124.56
GB Sterling	1.5944	2.7000	1.0000	1.0663	166.67	200.48	246.36	250.00	300.00
CH Franc	0.7118	1.2047	0.4339	1.0000	136.36	163.63	199.36	200.48	246.36
JP Yen	0.0086	1.5605	0.0027	0.0024	1.0000	124.56	146.36	146.36	179.36
CA Dollar	0.7273	1.2458	0.4443	0.4600	1.19	1.46	1.81	1.81	2.19
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0165	0.0002	0.0002	1440.30	1.0000	1.41	1.41	1.79
NL Guilder	0.0023	0.6334	0.0007	0.0007	73.60	89.34	109.36	110.36	136.36
FR Franc	0.1752	0.2368	0.1071	0.1071	24.63	29.36	36.36	36.36	44.36

Middle Eastern Currencies									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	1.0000	1.6365	0.6329	0.6557	110.36	136.36	163.63	166.67	200.48
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	2.3172	0.8326	0.8643	101.81	124.56	154.56	156.67	190.48
GB Sterling	0.2566	0.4339	0.1005	0.1066	12.46	15.46	19.36	19.36	23.63
Bahrain Dinar	2.55	4.2871	1.6365	1.6993	199.36	246.36	300.00	300.00	363.63
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.4645	0.1663	0.1724	20.48	25.00	30.00	30.00	36.36
Kuwait Dinar	3.3124	5.5727	2.0663	2.1467	250.00	300.00	363.63	363.63	443.63
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.4628	0.1663	0.1724	20.48	25.00	30.00	30.00	36.36
Lebanese/1000	0.85	1.4285	0.5383	0.5625	65.45	80.36	99.36	101.81	124.56
Egyptian	0.2500	0.4200	0.1500	0.1550	18.18	22.22	27.27	27.27	33.33

Energy									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
Brent	20.50	33.50	12.50	13.00	1500.00	1800.00	2200.00	2250.00	2700.00
WTI	21.20	34.50	12.50	13.00	1500.00	1800.00	2200.00	2250.00	2700.00
Bonny	20.50	33.50	12.50	13.00	1500.00	1800.00	2200.00	2250.00	2700.00
Dubai	19.10	31.50	11.50	12.00	1400.00	1700.00	2100.00	2150.00	2600.00
UL Gas	208.00	340.00	120.00	125.00	1500.00	1800.00	2200.00	2250.00	2700.00

Metal Prices									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
Gold (oz's)	342.5	560.0	210.0	215.0	2500.0	3000.0	3600.0	3650.0	4300.0
Silver (oz's)	4.75	7.75	3.00	3.10	35.00	42.00	51.00	52.00	62.00
Platinum (oz's)	380.0	610.0	240.0	245.0	2900.0	3500.0	4200.0	4300.0	5100.0
AL (3 Months)	1537	2500	950	970	11500	14000	17000	17500	21000
CU (3 Months)	2615	4250	1650	1700	20000	24000	29000	30000	36000
Zinc (3 Months)	1360	2200	850	870	10000	12000	15000	15500	18500
Lead (3 Months)	851	1380	530	550	6500	7800	9500	9800	11800
NI (3 Months)	7530	12200	4700	4900	58000	70000	85000	88000	105000

Main Equity Indices									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
New York	7345.91	12170.00	4770.00	4810.00	55000.00	67000.00	81000.00	83000.00	100000.00
DOW JONES	7345.91	12170.00	4770.00	4810.00	55000.00	67000.00	81000.00	83000.00	100000.00
S&P 500	447.03	730.00	280.00	285.00	3300.00	4000.00	4900.00	5000.00	6000.00
FTSE 100	4661.8	7600.00	2900.00	2950.00	34000.00	41000.00	50000.00	51000.00	61000.00
NIKKEI 225	20009	33000.00	12000.00	12500.00	145000.00	175000.00	210000.00	215000.00	260000.00
CAC 40	2762.9	4500.00	1700.00	1750.00	20000.00	24000.00	29000.00	30000.00	36000.00
DAX	3802.19	6200.00	2400.00	2450.00	29000.00	35000.00	42000.00	43000.00	51000.00

Energy									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
Coffee (c/lbs)	277.05	450.00	175.00	180.00	2100.00	2500.00	3000.00	3050.00	3600.00
Cocoa (lb/ton)	3479	5650.00	215.00	220.00	2550.00	3050.00	3650.00	3700.00	4400.00
Sugar (lb/ton)	326.8	530.00	205.00	210.00	2450.00	2950.00	3550.00	3600.00	4300.00
Wheat (lb/ton)	159	255.00	100.00	105.00	1250.00	1550.00	1900.00	1950.00	2300.00
Soya (c/lbs)	23.07	37.50	14.50	15.00	175.00	210.00	255.00	260.00	310.00
Tea (lb/kg)	155	250.00	100.00	105.00	1250.00	1550.00	1900.00	1950.00	2300.00
Barley (lb/ton)	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Rice (lb/ton)	480	780.00	300.00	310.00	3600.00	4300.00	5200.00	5300.00	6300.00

JOD Cross Rates									
	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	FRF	ESP	PTA
US Dollar	0.708	1.150	0.450	0.465	54.00	66.00	80.00	82.00	100.00
GB Sterling	1.1367	1.8625	0.700	0.725	84.00	102.00	124.00	126.00	150.00
DE Mark	0.4172	0.6875	0.275	0.285	33.00	40.00	49.00	50.00	60.00
CH Franc	0.8032	1.3057	0.500	0.515	60.00	72.00	87.00	89.00	108.00
FR Franc	0.1238	0.2045	0.080	0.083	9.60	11.60	14.00	14.30	17.00
JP Yen	0.8131	1.3262	0.510	0.525	61.00	74.00	89.00	91.00	110.00
NL Guilder	0.3712	0.6057	0.240	0.245	28.00	34.00	41.00	42.00	50.00
IT Lira	0.4242	0.6967	0.275	0.285	33.00	40.00	49.00	50.00	60.00

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

A show for children & the whole family!

Open Air Performance

At King Abdullah Gardens
at 8:00 p.m.
Everybody will participate!
Ticket price: 2 JD

Tuesday 27 May 1997
another performance at 8:00 p.m.
at the Aqaba Citadel
Free entrance

With the kind cooperation of Air France.

The French Cultural Centre
Tel. 637009-636445

Peanuts

SEE? I'M DRAWING A LANDSCAPE.

IT NEEDS A WATERFALL, AND A MOUNTAIN, AND A DEER STANDING IN A MEADOW, AND A SUNSET, AND A TINY LOG CABIN, AND A STREAM WITH A TROUT JUMPING OUT OF THE WATER...

AND A BORDER COLLIE HERDING SOME SHEEP.

Andy Capp

MONDAY 16/1997

WHEN YOU LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT I FEEL LIKE TURNING ROUND AND NEVER COMING BACK.

GET A MOVIE ON I CAN'T KEEP THIS UP MUCH LONGER...

Mutt'n'Jeff

YOU'RE PLAYING A GAME AGAINST HARRY OBITZ. THE GOLF PRO?

OH, I'LL BEAT HIM!

O.K. WE'RE ALL READY! NOW REMEMBER... THE SWINGS THE THING!

SOCK!

ALL RIGHTY! NOW I'LL TAKE A PRACTICE SWING, THEN WE'LL START THE GAME!

PLUNK!

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Take an oblique course

5 Dull pain

9 Frighten

14 TV personality

15 Applaud

16 Flynn of films

17 Inner: pref.

18 Close attention

19 Fresh-water ducks

20 Cyclops had just one

21 Worthy of esteem

23 Clergymen

25 Popular model

26 Labored breath

27 Concealed from view

32 Myanmar, formerly

34 Storage towers

35 Historical period

36 Egyptian goddess

37 Like the ocean

38 Chicken coop

39 — Moines

40 Foolish

41 Spill liquid

42 Toothless

44 Pepper's partner

45 Kayak necessity

46 Young girls

49 Class assignments

54 Beer kin

55 Correct an error

56 Boundary

57 Proficient

58 Photographer

59 Genuine

60 Touched ground

61 Not neat

62 Quite a few

63 Attorney general, Janet

DOWN

1 Take a nap

2 Nairobi's land

3 "Star Trek" vessel

4 Court

5 Stress

6 Teacher's group

7 Instrument

8 Sword

9 Moves in

10 Originate

11 Bedouin

12 Rock's partner

13 Different

21 Hollywood's

22 First name of

23A Barrett

24 Donaldson and

25A Houston

27 Move unobtrusively

28 Potter's medium

29 Open to discussion

30 Units of work

31 Short race

32 Wait

33 Partook of

34 River sediment

37 Headgear for Miss America

38 Building extensions

40 Majestic

41 Talk back

43 Bangs and paper

44 Sensibly

46 Utah city

47 Mrs. Irving Berlin

48 Take care of

49 Quantity of

50 Sea bird

51 Singer Mama —

52 Semester

53 Brilliant thought

57 Swiss river

Saturday's Puzzle solved:

ANSEL	GODS	SAMS
LORNA	IGET	ERIC
PRIMO	REBA	TITT
LITTLE	BIGHORN	
GRATIA	IDI	SEC
TINYALICE	GEESIE	
BLK	NOVA	AIM
REAL	NECKS	UCLA
IFS	HISS	LAI
PRADO	PETIT	FOUR
EEL	OAR	SOLIDS
SMALL	POTATOES	
TOME	PLAN	LEYME
ETON	LIMN	ICERS
REST	EXPO	ERIE

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Jordan Investment and Finance Bank transfers JD2.77 million of net profit to retained earnings

**** OPERATIONAL PROFIT** generated by the Jordan Investment and Finance Bank last year amounted to JD3.60 million, 7.3 per cent higher than the JD3.40 million posted in 1995. However, the net profit after deducting various other expenses stood at JD2.77 million, an increase of 4.4 per cent over the amount registered in 1995.

According to the annual report, the bank earned about JD16 million from interest (JD13.8 million in 1995) and JD1.54 million from commissions (JD1.49 million in 1995). Total assets registered a 9.5 per cent growth as it rose from JD195.5 million in 1995 to JD214.2 million in 1996. Deposits of clients increased by 3.1 per cent to reach JD164.0 million. Credit facilities went up by 13 per cent as they totalled JD95.3 million from JD84.3 million in 1995. The growth in total shareholders' equity was 8.7 per cent as the amount stood at JD18.75 million at the end of 1996 compared to JD17.20 million at the end of the previous year.

Board Chairman Nizar Jardaneh told the general assembly that the bank's capital will be raised to JD20 million either through capitalising a portion of the retained earnings which represent about JD4.5 million or through floating shares to shareholders for private subscription at prices lower than the market level. Another option would be to obtain a JD5.5 million from the Central Bank to be repaid from profits of future years. He revealed that the bank was negotiating a possible merger with another bank but did not provide details. New branches in Zarqa and Irbid will be opened in 1997, he said.

The general assembly concluded its meeting by approving the recommendation of the board of directors to transfer the JD2.77 net profit to retained earnings (Al Aswaq & Al Ra'i).

Jordan National Shipping Lines Company distributing JD0.9m in cash dividends

**** THE JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES** Company is distributing JD901,494 in cash dividends after the general assembly approved the recommendation of the board of directors to distribute dividends at a rate of 13 per cent. The company's net profit at the end of last year amounted to JD1.36 million.

According to Board Chairman Foteh Khamis, the company was able to rely more on its operational profit in 1996 after having relied on investment returns in the past. Returns on investments amounted to JD1.1 million last year compared to JD1.8 million in 1995. This 37 per cent drop was due mainly to the drop in the profit of the Arab Maritime Bridge Company in which the Jordanian firm has a 33 per cent stake.

Dr. Khamis told the shareholders that the company's net profit during the first four months of 1997 amounted to JD255,784 compared to only JD162,277 generated during the same period of 1996.

The company's total assets at the end of last year amounted to JD20.63 million (Al Dustour & Al Aswaq).

Jordan approves Swedish grant

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government on Saturday approved a JD913,869 Swedish grant to finance a consultancy study by the Jordan Telecommunication Company (JTC).

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi said.

Speaking to reporters following a Cabinet session, Dr. Mutawi said that the grant, donated by the Swedish Development Agency, will cover 45 per cent of the total costs of the study, the remainder will be paid by the Jordanian government.

Dr. Mutawi said that the Swedish government has doubled the grant from JD541,360 to JD913,869.

Walid Dweik, JTC director, told the Jordan Times that the grant will be used to finance the consultancy works of the \$200 million National Telecommunication Programme (NTP).

Mr. Dweik said that the grant will cover the expenses of experts who will supervise the NTP projects in the Kingdom, adding that the feasibility study for this project would also be covered through this grant.

Mr. Dweik added that the NTP includes establishing 21 telephone exchanges in different locations in the Kingdom as well as creating 470,000 new telephone lines throughout Jordan.

He said that the JTC has started the NTP works, which are being implemented by several Western companies; the

German firm Siemens is conducting the largest part of the project.

As a result of this programme, Mr. Dweik said, a few telephone exchanges were inaugurated in Amman, and others are expected to be inaugurated in the coming few months in other parts of the Kingdom.

Mr. Dweik explained that the NTP programme is partly financed by the JTC and that the remainder came through loans from international donors such as the European Investment Bank, the World Bank and the German Bank.

He added that the NTP, which was launched in 1995, will also include improving the telephone networks in the Kingdom.

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UAE goldsmiths thrive on expensive tastes of customers

ABU DHABI (AFP) —

Huge necklaces with coloured oriental designs and dangling chunks cover a large part of the facade of a gold shop in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), dwarfing the elegant Italian-made jewellery hung nearby.

Although some chains weigh up to one kilogramme and cost more than 50,000 dirhams (\$13,600) each, they attract female customers from the UAE, other wealthy Gulf states, India and Pakistan.

"Women from these countries love such pieces, which have different names and designs. Many of them buy despite their high prices," UAE gold dealer Mohammed Al Shuaibi

said as he spread out the long, rattling necklace.

"Such pieces are designed and made here or in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Italy does not make such things because there is no demand for them there."

The gold trade is one of the most prosperous sectors in the UAE, thriving on its high per capita income and the relatively low prices of the precious metal.

Dealers said prices of jewellery in the UAE emirate of Dubai, the main Gulf commercial centre, are among the lowest in the world because of the large quantity imported, low customs tariffs and the absence of income taxes.

UAE gold traders give priority to diversifying the quality and designs of the gold products they import to cater for the wide variety of tastes in the Gulf country, home to more than 50 nationalities.

"Westerners prefer Italian jewellery given its good quality and designs, which suit their needs. Customers from the UAE, India and Pakistan like products made in the Gulf, especially 22-carat gold," Mr. Shuaibi said.

"Customers from other Arab countries have different tastes. They prefer 21-carat gold and always ask for new designs. Such customers from the Philippines and China come for simple and non-expensive pieces. It is very difficult to satisfy all tastes but we keep trying."

The UAE, a major oil producer, has emerged as the biggest spender on gold in the world, with a per capita consumption of 30 grammes per year. In 1996, its gold imports peaked at around 350 tonnes, with a value of more than 15 billion dirhams (\$4.08 billion), nearly a fifth of the UAE's total imports.

Imports hit a record 100 tonnes in the first two months of 1997, allowing the emirates to overtake Singapore as the world's top gold centre.

Around 70 per cent of Dubai's gold imports are ingots, most of which are supplied to India, the biggest gold consumer in the world.

The rest are gold jewellery produced mostly by Italy as the UAE lacks major gold factories, having only small workshops that cannot meet local needs.

"Most of our imports of gold jewellery come from Italy. The rest is imported from Spain, as well as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, which have large factories for gold works," said Mohammed Radi, a retail UAE gold trader.

"Foreign tourists who visit our shops are fascinated by the numerous designs and shapes of our jewellery and their reasonable prices."

Figures by the World Gold Council (WGC) showed Switzerland was the top supplier of gold ingots to Dubai, with exports of 261.2 tonnes in 1996. Gold exports stood at 97.1 tonnes by Britain and 8.9 tonnes by South Africa.

Around 52 tonnes of those supplies were consumed in the local market, where demand remains strong.

"The saving factor in this country is very high because of the large disposable income," said Muad Barakat, director of WGC's planning and financial department for the Middle East and India.

"This has combined with social traditions of some people and women's love for gold to make the UAE the biggest spender on gold," he told AFP.

The surge in gold consumption in the UAE has prompted plans by three major Italian factories to set up branches in Dubai, according to Sultan Al Mansuri, deputy director general of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Such a move followed contacts between the chamber and the Italian gold market," he said without naming the three factories.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SUBSIDIARY											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 24/05/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS	CORPORATE NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADING	VALUE TRADED	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
2.100	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	10.9	0.00	23	13753	24756	1.60	1.80	-		
3.400	BANK OF JORDAN	10.9	0.00	1	50	300	3.00	3.01	0.01		
1.210	KID. EAST INV. CO.	68.3	0.00	1	300	313	1.02	1.04	0.02		
2.480	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	6.1	7.76	6	1456	3186	3.20	2.18	0.02		
5.100	THE HOUSING BK.	14.3	4.07	10	1550	16966	4.76	4.77	0.01		
2.190	JOR. INVEST. BANK	19.0	0.00	2	2021	3284	2.81	2.82	-		
1.050	JOR. GULF BANK	4.7	6.66	1	500	395	60	79	0.01		
4.050	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	16.7	3.31	14	2488	10377	3.63	3.62	0.01		
1.080	UNION RE. INV. INV.	0.08	0.00	13	5284	626	1.39	1.33	0.02		
3.800	JOR. INV. FUND BANK	20.4	0.00	2	167	593	3.17	3.17	-		
2.650	BETT. AL-MAL (BETID)	7	13.89	5	1478	2553	1.08	1.08	0.02		
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 193.14 %CHG: -0.06											
2.800	YAMOUT INSTR.	9.6	8.11	1	500	935	1.85	1.85	-		
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 113.59 %CHG: 0.00											
1.820	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	6.0	6.06	3	800	1125	1.65	1.65	-		
2.650	SHIPPING LINES	13.4	5.65	3	66	198	2.35	2.36	0.01		
1.480	KACEL. PORTFOLIO	0	0.00	12	6180	7110	1.12	1.14	0.02		
1.220	SAROA EDUCATION	0	0.00	10	10650	10131	96	97	0.01		
2.230	UNIFIED CO.	7.9	6.59	2	400	668	1.69	1.67	0.02		
1.080	OFFICE LAND DEV.	0	0.00	1	50	33	67	68	0.01		
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 110.05 %CHG: -0.39											
1.250	ATTACHMENT	0	0.00	12	10166	10356	98	1.03	0.05		
3.940	JOR. CHEST FACT.	26.4	2.81	76	80275	316031	3.92	3.92	-		
3.500	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	9.7	2.86	4	13150	46035	3.50	3.50	-		
6.410	ARAB POWER CO.	12.0	0.00	4	1510	34332	6.41	6.41	0.02		
10.400	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.0	9.58	6	273	2557	9.10	9.28	0.02		
1.470	WOODEN INDUSTRIES	9.6	9.01	1	250	278	1.17	1.11	0.06		
3.260	INDUSTRIAL CHEM. AG.	10.1	0.00	4	450	876	1.81	1.85	0.04		
3.970	ARAB FARM. IND.	7.8	10.43	1	100	230	2.35	2.30	0.05		
2.570	JORDAN DAIRY	17.2	5.76	2	450	626	1.39	1.39	-		
2.100	JOR. PAPER INDUSTRY	11.8	5.16	3	450	2166	4.75	4.83	0.08		
5.850	DAR AL-ANBA INV. CO.	10.6	0.00	11	9450	4725	58	58	-		
1.960	LYSTONCK & POLYMER	10.6	0.00	8	1028	1064	1.05	1.03	0.02		
1.310	ARAB PAPER CORP. LTD.	11.5	0.00	8	1028	1064	1.05	1.03	0.02		
1.520	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	0	0.00	3	3000	3240	1.08	1.08	-		
1.860	NATIONAL INDS.	7.7	12.54	8	2850	1487	53	52	0.01		
1.150	JOR. WOODWORK. INDS.	0	0.00	3	2350	1360	62	62	0.02		
3.730	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MFG.	43.0	0.00	4	1050	2817	2.70	3.68	0.02		
1.170	JOR. SULPHUR-CHRM.	0	0.00	5	2350	1188	1.43	1.42	0.01		
1.670	ARAB FRANK. CHRM.	18.1	0.00	4	1300	1188	1.43	1.42	0.01		
2.610	DRINK. BOTT. INDS.	0	18	7	3100	3051	1.46	1.44	0.02		
1.680	JOR. RESOURCES	15.3	8.77	9	2085	2377	1.15	1.14	0.01		
1.610	KACEL. CHEMICALS	13.3	4.56	6	1690	8750	1.40	1.41	0.01		
1.230	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	15.8	0.00	25	10120	8702	86	86	0.01		
2.090	KU. - KAY BERRY MEAN	0	0.00	6	2154	3396	1.60	1.57	0.03		
1.330	HYTEL. TOBACCO	6.3	0.00	12	4250	113	1.15	1.13	0.01		
1.370	UNION CH. & VEG.	39.6	0.00	12	1970	1970	68	67	0.01		
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 122.86 %CHG: +0.11											
GRAND TOTAL	INDEX: 155.85 %CHG: -0.01			373	218508	57092					
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 24/05/1997											
650	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	0	0.00	4	9000	3495	39	39	-		
750	JOR. TRADING CO.	12.3	0.00	0	9700	4367	45	46	0.01		
1.550	KARA FOR INVESTMENT	23.3	0.00	1	300	354	1.24	1.16	0.08		
840	UNION DEV. SOI	0	0.00	16	12979	3606	67	67	-		
610	ARAB FARM. IND.	0	0.00	26	11720	5533	48	48	-		
950	AL-DARILAH 75	14.2	0.00	6	5072	1927	63	63	-		
730	ARAB FOOD & MED.	0	0.00	3	1350	743	56	55	0.01		
430	ARAB TRADING CO.	15.7	0.00	5	1187	522	45	44	0.01		
800	KACEL. CHEM. IND.	0	0.00	41	155850	87279	56	56	-		
960	JORDAN STEEL	0	0.00	1	2000	1420	71	71	-		
730	WESTERN TOBACCO 75	0	0.00	12	5880	2559	43	43	-		
1.650	UNION TOBACCO 75	0	0.00	2	4000	2480	67	67	-		
760	RASH PHARM. 85	0	0.00	3	1700	729	59	57	0.02		
610	INDUS. CHRM.	20.7	0.00	10	15900	12996	61	79	0.02		
290	KACEL. CHEMICAL	0	0.00	3	500	315	63	63	-		
820	KACEL. POLYMER	0	0.00	3	1592	833	89	89	-		
1.000	KACEL. ALUMINUM 75	0	0.00	1	200	132	66	66	-		
670	KACEL. EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	1	200	132	66	66	-		
GRAND TOTAL											
	INDEX: 122.86 %CHG: +0.11			263	168293	480140					

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"If you wake up just 5 minutes earlier every day, that will give you an extra 30 hours per year to spend adoring me."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argrion

Unscramble these four jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GOGSY
LEBEL
RESTUM
PHOSUT

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here:

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumble: VENOM SYNOO PURPLE JAGUAR
Answer: She left the track star was giving her this - THE RUN AROUND

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

DAJANI Jewellers. Gems dealers. Unique designs in

Engqvist in doubt for Wimbledon

PATIENT

The actors are
on annual leave.
The theatre will
reopen July 2, 1978.



Houston Rockets' Charles Barkley (R) grabs a rebound over Utah Jazz forward Antoine Carr during second half action. Barkley scored 19 points and had 16 rebounds as the Rockets defeated the Jazz 118-100 in game three of the Western Conference Finals in Houston (Reuters photo)

Johnson leads Rockets past Jazz

HOUSTON (R) — The Houston Rockets rediscovered their bench and their point shooting — mainly in the person of Eddie Johnson — and climbed back into the Western Conference Finals with a 118-100 victory over the Utah Jazz Friday.

Johnson scored 31 points, Hakeem Olajuwon tallied 27 and Charles Barkley finally outplayed Karl Malone with 19 points and 16 rebounds for the Rockets, who returned home after two losses and tightened up the series with a convincing win. Game 4 is Sunday in Houston.

"This was a very important game for us and I'm so glad we put the pressure back on them," said Olajuwon.

Held scoreless in Game 2, the 38-year-old Johnson displayed the skills that have made him one of the NBA's most dangerous scorers for 15 years. In 28 minutes, he was 12-of-17 from the field, including 5-of-8 from 3-point range.

"I just made up my mind tonight," said Johnson, "we're down 2-0, when I get in there I'm going to shoot the ball, and if it doesn't go I'm not going to worry about it, just play my game."

Johnson had 14 points in the second quarter as the Rockets erased an early 13-point deficit. He hit a 3-pointer in a decisive run that ended the third quarter and added 14 more points in the fourth quarter.

Johnson led a bench that had been outscored 54-26 in the first two games of the series. Kevin Willis added 10 points and Threatt six as the Houston bench outscored Utah's 47-28.

"Eddie Johnson was phenomenal," Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich said. "He and Sedale Threatt complemented each other perfectly in the second quarter. Our bench gave us the spark that we talked about."

"I give the game ball to Eddie Johnson and Sedale Threatt," said Barkley.

"They gave us great energy and instant offence in the second quarter."

"We know our bench is better than theirs," said

Willis. "We have a lot of talent."

Malone scored 21 points and John Stockton added 17 for the Jazz, who lost for just the second time in 10 playoff games. Utah had not allowed more than 104 points in any of its previous 10 season games.

"I'm disappointed from the stand point that we played so well in the first two games and had them on the ropes tonight and then let them right back in the series," Jazz coach Jerry Sloan said.

Utah's last lead came at 66-65 on a basket by Greg Foster with 4:37 left in the third quarter, but Houston closed the period with a 15-6 burst. Drexler scored 15 points for the Rockets, who shot 59 per cent (44-of-75) from the field, including 12-of-25 3-pointers. Houston held a 38-30 rebounding edge.

Howard Eisley and Bryon Russell scored 10 points each for the Jazz, who shot 48 per cent (39-of-82) but made just 6-of-16 from behind the arc. Ostratag had nine rebounds but Malone snared just six.

"I'm personally disappointed by my play, especially on the boards," Malone said. "There's no excuse to be out rebounded by the man guarding you by 10 rebounds and Charles

certainly seemed to want it more tonight."

The Jazz were whistled for four illegal defences in the first period but shot 62 per cent (13-of-21) and opened a 31-18 advantage on a 40-foot buzzer-beater by Malone, who scored nine points.

"We were backed into a corner entering tonight," Tomjanovich said. "As scary as it was, that first quarter was the trigger that we needed. We came out swinging in the second." Houston's bench finally came alive behind Johnson, who scored 14 points in the second quarter. He fuelled a 14-2 burst that began the second quarter and pulled the Rockets within 32 with 8:21 left. His floating 15-footer in the final seconds gave Houston a 51-51 half-time tie.

"I hadn't been aggressive all series," Johnson said. "I've been sitting back and letting the big three (Olajuwon, Drexler, Barkley) do their thing. After we got down early, I knew it was time for me to step up." "In the first quarter, we played great team basketball and executed our offense as good as we have in the playoffs," Stockton said. "The second quarter was a direct contrast and then their bench proved too much."

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Graf battles for three hours to beat Coetzer

STRASBOURG (R) — Steffi Graf needed three hours to overcome South African Amanda Coetzer in the Strasbourg semifinals on Friday, avenging a crushing defeat in Berlin eight days earlier.

Graf, who took only one game from Coetzer in the German Open quarter-finals in her first tournament after a three-month injury layoff, won 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 to move into the final where she will meet unseeded 15-year-old Croatian Mirjana Lucic. Lucic, who has no world ranking as she is playing in only her second professional tournament, upset fourth seed Judith Wiesner of Austria 7-5 6-7 7-6 in a match only slightly shorter than Graf's at two and three-quarter hours.

It was Graf's 10th victory in 13 matches against Coetzer, who has proved a handful for the German this year, dumping her out of the Australian Open in the fourth round to end her record 45-match unbeaten run in Grand Slam tournaments.

It was the second successive match in which Graf has dropped the first set following her 3-6, 6-2, 6-1 quarter-final win over Frenchwoman Sandrine Testud on Thursday.

But the former World No. 1 said she was happy to get as much clay court action as possible before beginning the defence of her French Open title in Paris next week.

"I don't think I'm getting too much, though I hope I won't get any three-hour matches in the French open," she said, adding that it "will probably not be until Wimbledon that I get my game back."

Graf said she might have done better against Coetzer if she had attacked the net more, adding she was still lacking confidence after her knee injury.

"Berlin for me just wasn't a match, I wasn't concentrated and I was nervous," she said.

Asked how she felt about meeting Coetzer again at Roland Garros where they are both in the same half of the draw, Graf said: "Let's just take it match by match."

Championship honouring Firas Ajlouni starts June 14

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In honour of one of the veteran players in Jordanian basketball history, a championship named after 1967 war hero Firas Ajlouni is due to start June 14 at the Sports Palace.

The championship will be held under the Patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Hassan and will bring together four teams. "Top four teams have agreed to participate in the championship honouring Pilot Al Ajlouni who fell in the course of duty during the 1967 war," former national team veteran and President of the Jordan Basketball Federation

Awad Haddad Saturday told the Jordan Times.

"Al Karkh from Iraq, De La Salle from Palestine, Al Ahli and the Jordanian Air Force team will take part," he added.

"We have invited the best teams to play in honouring all those who paid their lives for their country," he noted.

Iraq's Al Karkh is considered one of the best teams in the Arab world. De La Salle team is considered a strong team in Palestine and Jordan's 1990, 92, 93 and 94 champion and this year's runner up champion Al Ahli.

"Firas Al Ajlouni was player in the Jordan Club and a member of the Kingdom's national basketball team. He set an example to the other players with his dedication and support of the game and his country," Haddad concluded.

Villeneuve on pole for Williams in Spanish Grand Prix

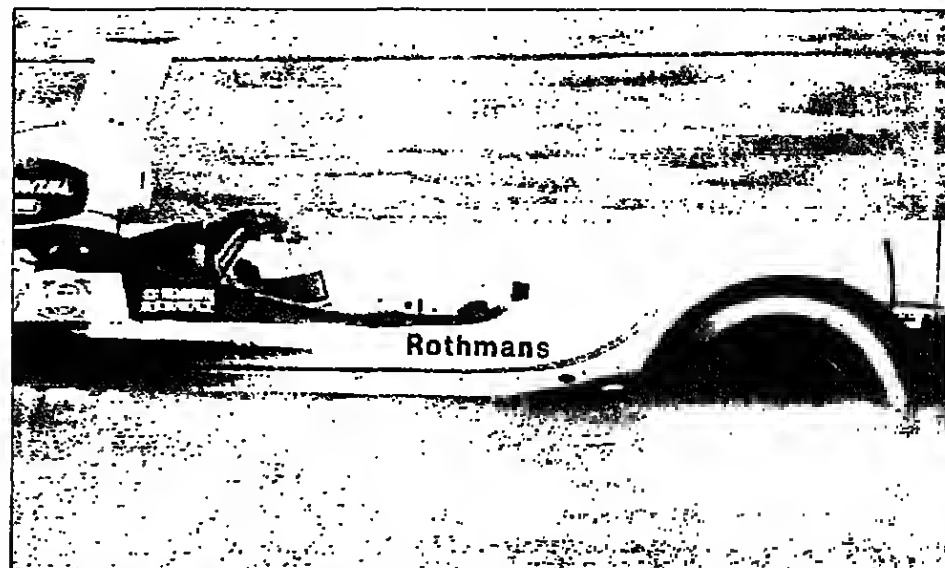
BARCELONA (R) — Canadian Jacques Villeneuve set a new qualifying lap record and secured his fifth pole position of the season on Saturday in qualifying for Sunday's Spanish Grand Prix.

Villeneuve outpaced his Williams team-mate Heinz-Harald Frentzen to clinch his eighth pole position of his career.

The Canadian clocked a fastest time of one minute and 16.525 seconds with just three minutes of the session remaining.

His time cut more than four seconds off the previous record pole time set by Briton Damon Hill in a Williams last year — another comprehensive demonstration of the increased speed of this year's cars as a result of the tyre war between Goodyear and Bridgestone.

Villeneuve was just two-tenths of a second faster than Frentzen, whose Frenchman Jean Alesi in a Benetton.



Canadian pilot Jacques Villeneuve drives his car to make pole position during the final practice for the upcoming Spanish Formula One Grand Prix at the Montmelo racetrack near Barcelona. Villeneuve is currently placed second in the overall world championship standings (Reuters photo)

His pole also extended the Williams team's domination of the prime grid position to 10 successive

races stretching back to last year's Hungarian Grand Prix on the 20th anniversary of the team's first race, the Spanish Grand Prix of 1977.

Heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson takes questions during a press conference at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas. Tyson held an open workout for the press as he trains for the WBA heavyweight title rematch against Evander Holyfield on June 28 in Las Vegas (Reuters photo)



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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAN HIRSH

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠ A J 10 6 3 ♣ Q J 8 5 ♦ 5 ♣ A K E
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 2♣ Pass
2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass
What do you bid now?
Q. 2 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠ 4 ♣ A Q 8 6 2 ♦ 10 8 5 3 ♣ A K E
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 2♣ Pass
2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass
What do you bid now?
Q. 3 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠ A J 7 3 ♣ J 8 ♦ Q J ♣ A K E
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 2♣ Pass
2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass
What do you bid now?
Q. 4 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠ A 3 ♣ 10 9 7 6 2 ♦ A 5 ♣ K 9 8 5
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 2♣ Pass
2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass
What do you bid now?
Q. 5 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠ A K ♣ 10 9 8 3 2 ♦ A Q 8 5 4 3
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 2♣ Pass
2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass
What do you bid now?
Q. 6 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠ A K ♣ K Q ♦ K 10 5 4 3 ♣ 9 8 5 4
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1♣ Pass 2♣ Pass
2♦ Pass 3♦ Pass
What do you bid now?

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Khatami: Islamic cleric but social reformer who is popular with women and the youth

TEHRAN (AP) — Mohammad Khatami, who won a landslide victory in Iran's presidential election, has lived in the West, speaks two European languages and sees no reason why women should not have senior positions in government.

Although his ideas on women, youth and the role of religion are radical for an Iranian cleric, Mr. Khatami is not expected to fundamentally change Iran's foreign policy or clergy-dominated politics.

Mr. Khatami, for example, has ruled out improving ties with the United States, saying "this is not the right time for it."

But that is a change from hard-liners who call the United States the great Satan and say Tehran can never reconcile with Washington.

A former minister of culture, Mr. Khatami is credited with reviving Iranian music and cinema after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Under Mr. Khatami, Iranian directors swept several international awards. Although revolutionary clerics banned live concerts, Mr. Khatami allowed them. He also helped lift the ban on women singing in public by permitting a concert by the Iranian singer Parisa — albeit for an all female audience. Hard-liners removed him from power in 1992 for his liberal views.

"When he was minister of culture we had few problems with things like censorship," said Mohammad Razzavi, owner of a publishing house in Tehran. "Now we have many."

Mr. Razzavi said if Mr. Khatami were declared the victor, "I will give out

sweets to all my customers for 10 days."

Mr. Khatami would replace President Hashemi Rafsanjani, whose four-year term ends in August.

Mr. Khatami, a Hojatoleslam or middle-ranking cleric, wears the black turban that defines him as a direct descendant of Islam's prophet Mohammad. A victory for Mr. Khatami would be a setback for hard-line mullahs who have ruled since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Mr. Khatami's campaign was widely supported by Iranian youth, who hope for an easing of social restrictions, but was opposed by the more conservative clergy. They feared that he is not fully committed to the revolution and had instructed people to vote for his arch-conservative opponent, parliament speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri.

Mr. Khatami, 54, speaks English, German and Arabic in addition to his native Farsi. He recently told Zanan, a monthly women's magazine, that he sees "no obstacle to women becoming ministers in the government."

It is widely expected that Mr. Khatami would become the first president to appoint women in his cabinet. He says women should be economically independent, shake off male domination, and vie for senior positions in the government.

Mr. Khatami, who is known for his modesty, said "ambition is a curse, especially for anyone in a position of power."

Mr. Khatami is most popular among the youth, who hope that if elected he will ease restrictions on satellite television dishes and dating.



NEW MODERATE PRESIDENT IN IRAN: Former culture minister Mohammad Khatami waving to his supporters before casting his vote in Tehran, on Friday. Khatami won elections with a landslide victory against the conservative establishment headed by Parliament Speaker Nateq-Nouri (AFP photo)

During the election campaign, a secret group calling itself the Tehran rappers association passed out leaflets supporting Mr. Khatami.

Mr. Khatami was first exposed to the West when he was appointed head of

the Islamic centre in Hamburg, Germany, before the revolution.

Although conservative clerics often do not allow their wives to leave home without their permission, Mr. Khatami, who says he

owes his success to his wife, says she is free to leave the house whenever she wants.

Mr. Khatami has two daughters and a son. He was born in Ardakan, in central Yazd province, and has degrees in theology and philosophy. (See election story on page 1)

Akashi optimistic on oil-for-food rollover

U.S. and Iraq up pressure

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. humanitarian coordinator Yasushi Akashi Friday expressed optimism that an oil-for-food deal with Iraq would be renewed for a further six months after an initial six-month period.

Mr. Akashi told a news conference that "I'm optimistic" by nature, and if everything goes well until the 10th of June and there seems to be good positive momentum, I think extension may be not such a big surprise.

Mr. Akashi, the U.N. undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, is to report to U.N. Chief Kofi Annan on his findings during a just-ended visit to Baghdad during which he monitored implementation of the scheme.

Mr. Akashi noted that U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Bill Richardson had warned Thursday that certain problems needed to be cleared up to ensure U.S. support for a renewal of the deal by the Security Council.

The U.N. official said the United Nations was attempting to deal with the issues raised by the U.S. delegation, notably "a long shopping list" of demands from Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq.

But he added that the Iraqi side had also warned that unless delays in approving contracts were resolved, Baghdad would not ask for a rollover. Iraq accuses

Washington of deliberately putting contracts on hold for political reasons, which the United States denies.

Under U.N. Resolution 986, whose implementation was negotiated between

Iraq and the United Nations, Iraq may export up to two billion dollars' worth of oil every six months in return for sorely-needed food and medicine.

Mr. Akashi said that more than \$1.5 billion had been deposited in the escrow account which controls the money from the oil sales.

Sixty-six per cent of the funds are used to buy humanitarian supplies, while the rest goes to defray U.N. costs and compensation for the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Mr. Akashi, who toured Iraq May 3-9, said that humanitarian conditions in the country "left an indelible impression on me."

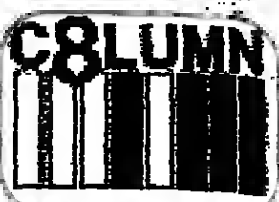
In the hospitals, he said, he saw "a lot of emaciated children, and at the hospital shelves there's a clear lack of medicine, even essential, elementary medicine. Old needles are still being used for injections."

According to Mr. Akashi, the Iraqi government was according the 151 U.N. monitors "full freedom of movement" and only "minor incidents" had been recorded.

"One can say that the government is making a good effort to distribute the food on an equitable basis," he said.

Mr. Akashi also said that the Turkish offensive into the extreme north of Iraq had not disrupted the distribution of U.N. supplies.

Iraq has been under U.N. sanctions since the Kuwait invasion. The oil embargo can only be lifted when U.N. arms inspectors certify that Baghdad has complied with U.N. disarmament requirements.



Nasser's grandson marries daughter of Egyptian FM

CAIRO (AFP) — The daughter of Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa has married the grandson of former President Jamal Abdul Nasser in a lavish ceremony on the banks of the Nile River. Hania Musa, 24, exchanged vows with Ahmad Ashraf Marwan Friday before 1,800 guests, including Suzanne Mubarak, the wife of President Hosni Mubarak. Her new husband, a 27-year-old businessman, is the son of Nasser's eldest daughter, Mona Abdul Nasser and wealthy businessman Ashraf Marwan. Entertainers at the wedding included famous Egyptian belly dancer Dina and singing stars Amr Diab and Mustafa Kamar. While President Mubarak did not attend Friday's festivities, he took part in the religious ceremony for the signing of the marriage contract three days earlier.

Jake the cat hailed as hero for stopping burglar

SAN DIEGO (R) — The ailing, 18-year-old orange and white feline, Jake, leaped at the suspect, landed on his shoulder and clawed his back and both arms, San Diego detective James Dixon said. He said the suspect, Juan Mendez-Guzman, a Mexican who had worked as a locksmith, allegedly broke into the apartment of a 33-year-old woman by picking the lock to her door. A watch on top of the VCR began beeping. Apparently fearing the woman would wake up, he crept into her bedroom, Dixon said. "The next thing he knew, the cat jumped on his right shoulder and scratched him on his lower back and both arms. I'm sure the cat startled the guy and he yelled out," the detective said.

New Mexico grandmother "holds up" bank by mistake

ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexico grandmother accidentally held up a bank when she landed in a deposit slip on which a prankster had scrawled a holdup message, police said Friday. The 61-year-old woman and her daughter made the deposit at the drive-up window of an Albuquerque bank and were waiting for a receipt. Thursday when police cars surrounded them and officers ordered them out of their vehicle at gunpoint. "We were just stunned with all these guns pointed at us," the woman told the Albuquerque Journal. "They cuffed me, and they cuffed my daughter. And we stood out there like fools." She said the robbery note on the back of the deposit slip read something like, "This is a holdup. I have a bomb."

Topless model in India sparks protest

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ruling party is to organise protests against a company which used a topless model to launch slimming equipment, a newspaper reported Saturday. The Janata Dal (People's Party) of Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said the model was featured at a press conference in a Bombay hotel. "The hotel staff was asked to vacate the plush room as a topless demonstration (of the equipment)," the Times of India quoted Bombay-based party leaders as saying. "The model lay on bed to show how a series of electrical belts could knock off fat and firm up the body. The journalists were even invited for a closer look," it added.

4 syndicate presidents resign, more to follow

(Continued from page 1)

days later.

They also called off plans to continue demonstrating in protest of the law after a "peaceful protest" near the Prime Ministry last week resulted in injuries and arrests.

Journalists have criticised the efforts of the union leaders as demonstrating considerable disunity over what further action should be taken.

Heads of associations today, however, denied that the failure to collectively resign indicated a division within the presidents' council.

"Our decision was clear," said Mr. Sherif, president of the JPA, the association spearheading the effort to have the new press law abolished. "All (president's) will submit their resignations by June 22 unless the government negotiates with us. We have left the option open for those who want to resign now to do so."

The presidents said a collective resignation was not possible due to restrictions in their bylaws that either do not allow them to take such action without prior approval of their respective councils or would result in the automatic dissolution of their councils.

"Simply, there are legal problems in submitting collective resignations," said Dr. Bassam Dajani, president of the Jordan

Medical Association. "Therefore, each president should refer to his own bylaws. But our action is decided. As far as I am concerned, I will submit mine, probably, by Monday."

The June 22 deadline set by the presidents follows a decision of the Executive Council of Professional Associations to resign en masse as of June 21. By following the council's decision, said Mr. Sherif, the presidents' council would be allowed more time to initiate a dialogue with the government regarding the issue.

Mr. Sherif has been advocating dialogue since the outset of the crisis wrought by the law's introduction.

The JPA was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi yesterday to discuss the press law, expected to curb freedom of expression and to close down the majority of weekly newspapers, most of which the government considers antagonistic.

However, the meeting with the government was postponed due to yesterday's summit between His Majesty King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Aqaba.

Journalists, however, are sceptical as to the extent to which the JPA's efforts can sway the government since the

government already has strongly stated that it would not consider any amendment to the law.

Additionally, a split in the association's council, aligning council members on one side, and Mr. Sherif on the other, resulted in the council's wavering over resignation.

"There is a distinct division between us and Mr. Sherif," said a council member who declined to be identified. "I can say that the head of the JPA betrayed us because it seems he was notified of the law... and he did not tell any of the council the details when he knew."

Although Mr. Sherif told the Jordan Times on Friday that he "strongly denied" that anyone had contacted him "officially or unofficially" with regards to the press law, he said yesterday in a statement to the press said that he had been informed that a new law was pending, and that Dr. Mutawi had read "samples" of the articles to him during a meeting in Al Dastour offices on May 15, two days before the law was enacted.

He added that he had not been aware that the legal counsel at the prime ministry had finished discussing the law in preparation for its final submission to the cabinet, and that he did ask that the draft be shown to the JPA through official channels.

Jordan marks...

(Continued from page 1)

British and Jordanian governments signed the first Jordanian-British treaty.

In 1934 the treaty was amended for the first time and in 1939 it was amended again. Under the amendment, Prince Abdullah was designated supreme commander of the Arab Armed Forces. Jordan in the last 51 years witnessed a great deal of development.

Under the leadership of King Hussein, Jordan has become a regional leader in human rights, freedom of

speech, political pluralism, democracy and democratic dialogue officially established within the framework of the Constitution and the National Charter.

On this occasion, His Majesty the King received cables of congratulations from Jordanian notables and dignitaries who expressed their allegiance to his leadership and loyalty to the Kingdom.

The Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications Saturday declared it will issue commemorative stamps on this occasion.

Khatami reaps...

(Continued from page 1)

tion campaign Mr. Khatami attracted a broad coalition of centrists close to Mr. Rafsanjani, Islamist left-wingers and women, youths and intellectuals seeking a more relaxed application of Islamic morals.

The coalition was formed to counter conservatives accused by Mr. Khatami's supporters of trying to monopolise state power by adding the presidency to their control of the 270-seat parliament, where Mr. Nateq-Nouri holds sway.

Mr. Khatami, an "Ayatollah's son", is considered an

open-minded religious intellectual and tolerant politician.

He advocates more personal freedom, democracy and the rule of law in a country of 60 million where many complain state bodies act arbitrarily and rules are changed according to the whim of officials.

He also appeals to devout Shiites because he holds the title Sayed. The result was a blow to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who outranks the president and tacitly supported Mr. Nateq-Nouri.

Husseini lashes out at Netanyahu's solution

(Continued from page 1)

Netanyahu. "When we told them (the Israelis) that we are in need of 130,000 housing units for the Palestinian people they said they can agree on 122,000. Later they reduced the number gradually to 15,000, 12,000, 7,000, 1500 and now 400 units," said Mr. Husseini.

"We have no trust in Netanyahu and we totally reject this offer" added Mr. Husseini in an interview with the Jordan Times.

"We, the Palestinians, demand that they build housing units for us because they had confiscated our land and our funds. They come to our country to build with our money on our land and then dictate on us their own terms and define the number and the shape of buildings they want us to have," he added.

"As for the settlements on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip we demand that they stop. As long as the negotiations are under way, Israel should not build settlements," he added.

Mr. Husseini said "our battle with the Israelis hinges on their declaration that Jerusalem is their political, economic and religious capital."

"It is trying to create a fait accompli situation by isolating the Arabs, evicting them from their lands and replacing them with Jewish settlers," said Mr. Husseini.

"Arab Jerusalem citizens wishing to build homes are requested to pay \$130,000 to Israel in advance, something that prompted them to request loans to build homes outside the city but the Israelis then withdrew these citizens' identity cards depriving them of their rights as citizens of Jerusalem."

Audit reveals PNA...

(Continued from page 1)

and their elected representatives in the Palestinian legislative council of corruption by cabinet officials and government employees.

Palestinian lawmakers Wednesday charged that the PNA was using taxpayers' money on villas and cars for ministers and other senior officials.

"For example we found that \$45-\$50 million should have gone to the budget from custom fees on cars, but this money was lost on giving people cars without paying customs," Mr. Qudwa said.

He said the PNA's losses from mismanaging funds for projects and improper distribution of state land was estimated at \$67 million.

He did not say if any of

the mismanaged money came from donations from foreign states.

"Our report mentions some officials by name who have given certain companies projects to work on because they have personal interests with those companies," Mr. Qudwa told Voice of Palestine Radio.

He said his report would be made public soon.

"Any money that is spent without the permission of the Finance Ministry is money squandered," he said.

Finance Minister Mohammad Zuhdi Al Nashashibi acknowledged publicly last week that several companies functioning in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had not paid taxes.

He also said reform was needed in PNA ministries.



Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa applauds as his 24-year-old daughter Hania appears on the arm of her groom Ahmad Marwan, 27, at their wedding ceremony, on Friday (see first story in Column 8) (AFP photo)